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REVELATIONS
OF
THE LIFE OF
PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

FROM THE PAPERS OF THE LATE
M. COLMACHE,
●
PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRINCE.

Second Edition.

LONDON :
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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND has left a name in Europe perhaps the greatest ever achieved by any man in France who has devoted himself exclusively to the civil offices of the state. In the present century he has become as great a diplomatic authority as was Machiavelli in the sixteenth; and hence the Hôtel Talleyrand, in the Rue St. Florentin, has been regarded by every disciple of state-craft who has visited the French capital, with perhaps as much veneration as the literary devotee accords to the more humble abode at Stratford of the great master of English poetry.

The brilliant career of so public a character as Prince Talleyrand has necessarily become much canvassed, but up to the present time, no account has been published of his private history, more particularly of his early life. This, however, could only be written by some one peculiarly in the Prince's confidence, who possessed favourable opportunities for studying his personal cha-

racteristics, and of becoming acquainted with his first struggles, experiences, and adventures.

The writer of the papers in this work enjoyed such opportunities in an eminent degree, and was in the habit of noting down Talleyrand's revelations and recollections, which were from time to time imparted to him; and the result, as now laid before the public, it will readily be allowed, affords a more interesting portrait of this illustrious statesman than has hitherto been given to the world. Very curious particulars and scenes in Prince Talleyrand's own career are combined with extraordinary anecdotes of his contemporaries, and details are given of private adventure and domestic habits, which, in a truly remarkable and novel manner, illustrate the events of that great drama in which he acted so part.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It seems scarcely necessary to observe, that the young diplomatist and Mons. C. (Colmache) are one and the same person—the former having been introduced for the sake of disguising the real author, a step which is no longer necessary.

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REVELATIONS

OF THE

LIFE OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

CHAPTER I.

TALLEYRAND AT VALENÇAY.

IT was during the autumn of 18—, that, passing through Paris, on my way to the south of Europe, I ventured to pay a visit to that hallowed shrine—that Mecca of all young diplomatists—the Hôtel Talleyrand, in the Rue St. Florentin, to obtain, as it were, a blessing and an imposition of hands from the high-priest of the diplomatic craft, ere I ventured, novice as I then was, to put forth on the unknown sea of politics. Perhaps there lingered in my mind a latent hope of acquiring some new information concerning the hidden rocks and shoals, the under-currents, which were not yet marked down in the very imperfect chart at that time existing in my brain, and by the aid of which I might, by steering aright, gain more quickly than my colleagues the glorious port of ambassadorship.

I had previously had the good fortune to form part of a company, assembled by the owner of P—— House, to meet the Prince de Talleyrand, during the very last Easter vacation which he had spent in England; so

that it was not as a complete stranger that I now ventured to seek the presence of his excellency.

The hour was somewhat late for a morning visit, when I called at the hotel: but I had been told by one who knew him well, that his hour of *confidence* and kindness—his hour of *benevolence*, in short—was decidedly the one hour before dinner; and I had acted entirely upon the strength of this friendly warning.

I was not disappointed; for I found the veteran diplomatist enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, after the fatigues of the day. He was seated in his easy chair, reclining with that peculiarly easy grace which, in spite of his lameness, characterized his every attitude and movement. A bundle of newspapers lay upon the table before him; some were scattered on the floor around; but he had evidently forgotten, for the moment, the world and all its fretful politics, and was gazing with fond affection at the gambols of his fair young niece, who was on her knees upon the floor by his side, her arm resting upon the elbow of his chair, teasing and provoking the large English spaniel, Carlo, the delight of the prince, and his constant companion.

It would be difficult for a painter to imagine a scene more interesting, or even more poetical, than the one which thus suddenly presented itself to me. The long golden hair of the child fell forward in a glittering shower, blending with the silvery masses which, to the latest hour of his life, shaded in such luxuriant abundance the calm brow of the prince; and as he bent down over her, the contrast between the fair and blooming face, animated as it was by the glow of youth and the excitement of the game, with that cold, impenetrable countenance, those fixed and marble features, was rendered yet more striking. It was the dim immovable Past, seeking to interrogate the busy, smiling Future; Old Time striving to detain one single rosy hour, and pausing to gaze while yet the charm endured. There was, indeed, over the whole scene a shadow of bygone times, which the graceful figure of that fair girl alone seemed to attach to the Present.

The drawing-room into which I was ushered was noble and lofty, although an *entresol*, and through the high casements the setting sun of autumn poured in its rich and glowing beams, seeming to pause in fondness over that scene, and, forgetting all besides, to linger there. Through the arched vista of the Tuileries, late so green, but already bared of foliage, the darkening sky gave token of the near approach of twilight, and I could not help being struck with the fitness of the emblem.

I had leisure to contemplate the scene; for the low suppressed laughter of the child, and the playful growling of old Carlo, had prevented the announcement of my name from immediately reaching the ear of his excellency, and it was not till I stood within a step or two of his chair that he became aware of my presence. He then rose slightly, leaning on his cane, and gave me that gracious and courtly welcome—a reminiscence of the old *régime*—which neither his passage through the revolutionary mire, nor even across the broad Atlantic, had been able to mar. That bland and polished urbanity was the attribute of a race of men of which he was the last representative, and of which we shall see the like no more.

My conference with him was but short, and passed chiefly in inquiry after the friends I had left; some few questions concerning my future destination; an observation or two respecting the *chargé d'affaires* at that time resident at the court to which I was bound; but nothing further; and I, who had indulged in vague dreams of the treasures of advice concerning my new career, to be gathered during this interview, was just on the point of taking my leave, without having dared to breathe a hint upon the subject which lay uppermost in my thoughts, when, to my delight, amid the numberless kind things he uttered upon the subject of my journey, he added, with a bland and courteous smile, which from the old to the young so greatly enhances the value of the kind speech, “*vous viendrez nous voir à Valençay?*”

And then, as though he had reserved all his urbanity

till the last, acting upon his own principle of "always waiting to the end," he told me that he himself was on the point of hastening thither,—that I should see him no more in Paris,—that the place would not be far out of my road on my journey southwards; and the kindness of the tone, the friendly glance with which the words were accompanied, left me no doubt of their sincerity; so I accepted the invitation with the most joyful alacrity, and, before we parted, he himself had fixed the day for our meeting again—at Valençay!

At Valençay! Here then, was I about to accomplish by a mighty stride, to overleap by a single bound, many a weary league on the highway of politics; and moreover, to gain ease for the remainder of the dusty journey. So, with these pleasant illusions in my mind, it cannot be wondered at if I rather hastened than retarded my movements. With a heart beating high with expectation did I set forth on this pilgrimage. It had been one of my day-dreams, which I was about to convert into reality. I had so often longed to behold the great statesman in his retirement, and now I was about to see him in his hours of leisure and of *laisser-aller*, and to share with his chosen inmates all the treasures of his rich and varied store of reminiscences!

I had heard that it was his great delight, when at Valençay, to call up the spirits of the shadowy past, and that here he seemed to live and breathe amongst them; that here he took no heed of to-day, or of what might befall on the morrow; that his soul was with the past—his thoughts were all of days gone by, and lingered not with the present. By turns abiding amid the courtly saloons of the days previous to the Revolution, he would tell of Madame de Boufflers and Marie Antoinette, and of the *folle vie* led by the young, when he, too, was in his youth. Then the rude Conventional—the stern Republican—the warlike figures of the Empire—the pale, dim Silhouettes of the Restoration, would all arise and pass in crowded array before his enchanted audience; with such grace and truth, too, were they all endowed, that sometimes the listener could believe that he had

seen and heard the like, and that he too had been of them and among them.

Valençay had ever been the favourite residence of the prince. It was here that he had ever preferred seeking relief from the political turmoil of the moment,—perhaps to repose after the fatigues of the last struggle,—perhaps to gain fresh courage and vigour for that which, with his unerring foresight, he knew to be inevitable. It was here that he sought the rest which he sometimes needed—it is here that, by his own desire, he now reposes for ever.

These are the reminiscences which must henceforth render Valençay one of those few favoured spots, scattered here and there over the surface of our dull earth, towards which Fancy hurries on before, and where Memory lingers long behind; places that shine out, amid the dullness of this dreary world, with the bright lustre which the memory of the great and good has shed around them, and which, to the traveller through the land where they are found, become hallowed shrines, that it is scorn and reproach to have visited the country without beholding.

In my case, and young as I then was, it is no wonder if I approached, with feelings of almost undue reverence, the spot where dwelt the last great statesman of the age—the last, at least, of that class of men who, single-handed and alone, could lead, by the very force of their spirit, whole nations to think as they thought, and to act as they directed. Imagination had indeed gone on long before, and paused to await me at the gates of the Château of Valençay. Nor was I disappointed on my first approach. It is a noble and stately pile, well suited to the regal tastes and habits of him who at that time shed additional lustre over its sumptuous retirement.

The dark forest, through which the road lies for many miles, gives a grandeur to the scenery, of which this part of France is elsewhere almost entirely devoid. The broad Moorish towers of the château are seen for some time, alternately appearing, and then lost to sight, until finally they form the termination of the splendid

avenue de Gâtines, through which they are beheld at a great distance, gradually rising in the perspective, and seeming to increase in size as the traveller draws near, with an effect almost magical. Nothing can be finer or more original than the appearance of these far-famed towers, which give to the building an air of oriental grandeur, perfectly unique. They were built at different periods, the first one having been added to the edifice, which at the time was already a mixture of Gothic and *moyen-âge* architecture, by M. de Luçay, on his return from his travels in the East, and their broad shining domes, surmounted by light gilt weather-cocks, bring strangely to mind the mosques and palaces of the Asiatic cities.

The approach to the château is particularly grand and magnificent, being through an avenue of glorious old chestnut-trees, through which, at the moment of my arrival, the long rays of the evening sun were pouring, all aslant, over the green turf, making wide patches of the soft grass appear all on flame, while the shadows thrown between appeared black and mysterious from the contrast. The carriage drove up the noble avenue de Gâtines. The gay postilions, with long tri-coloured ribbons fluttering in the wind, with plaited pigtail and heavy jack-boots, cracking their whips, with loud halloo, to cheer forward the wild, scampering rope-harnessed horses, gave such an *air de régence* to the scene, that I could almost fancy myself, as I leaned eagerly forward in the carriage, to be the hero of one of Marivaux's delightful novels, and to be some one of his dear ingenious Counts de P., about to pay his first visit to some fascinating, rebellious, unfaithful Marquise de F. or de N. Had such indeed been the case, I do not think the said hero could have felt more alarmed and embarrassed then I did during the few moments when the carriage, having turned into the great gates, drove with stunning *fracas* round the wide *cour d'honneur*, and stopped at the princely *perron* of the vestibule.

It was quite a relief to learn from the domestic, who conducted me, through an endless labyrinth of staircases and

corridors, to my room, that the large party then assembled at the château had all dispersed after the usual early dinner, and that the building was at the moment a complete desert. Nothing could suit me better, for it gave me time to collect all my scattered ideas, and to establish myself in the great drawing room, *receiving* not *received*; and all timid juveniles know well the full value of this difference. The view from the windows of this room was magnificent. An ancient and heavy cloister, forming a cool shady piazza during the summer, and a dry and cheerful retreat in winter, lay immediately without, and through each arch the varied and rich landscape was enframed. The broad expanse of park, with its dark belt of forest beyond, and the little town of Valençay, with the Gothic spire of its church, and the white roofs glittering in the sun, by turns appeared, as I moved on, like the images in a child's magic lantern.

In a short time, the various stragglers began to return from their walks, and I was delighted when, among the very first persons who greeted me, I recognised an old acquaintance, whom I had often seen in society during the prince's embassy in London. Those who have ever felt the delight of finding an acquaintance in a strange land, and where we had anticipated meeting none but strangers, will readily believe my joy at being greeted in well-remembered accents by C., who became from that moment a valued and precious friend, more so than many whom I had known and loved from childhood, but who were now absent, and could afford me no aid in encountering the mighty leviathan within reach of whose tremendous jaws I seemed so thoughtlessly to have wandered.

With the kind assistance of this friend, however, I began, in a very short time, to regain my confidence, and, before the creaking of carriage-wheels upon the gravel without had announced the return of the Prince from his evening drive, I had been *mis au courant* of all the *habitudes de la maison*, and the station and character of each individual had been so fully laid down to me, that I now felt armed with too much foreknowledge to

dread any longer the ignorance and inexperience which had so often been my worst enemies.

The room was well nigh filled by the time the Prince had descended from his carriage, and, preceded by old Carlo, barking and yelping, had slowly traversed the wide vestibule. For such is the courtier-like propensity of human nature, that, although no warning-bell had summoned the different stragglers homeward, yet, by marvellous instinct, they all seemed aware of the very moment of the prince's return to the château, and pressed eagerly to the saloon to receive him. There was a general advance towards the door when the prince entered, leaning on his gold-headed cane, and then the assembly divided in the midst, to allow him to pass through, to gain his large *fanteuil* by the fire. This movement gave an effect to his *entrée*, of indescribable interest. Altogether, it was one of the prettiest pieces of small-court ceremony I ever witnessed.

The conversation was carried on, for some little time, standing, the company separating in small groups; but, when lights were brought, and the prince had fairly taken his seat at the whist-table, the *salon* began, though gradually, to clear. Some of the guests retired to rest, in order to be abroad betimes on the morrow; some withdrew stealthily by a side door, and presently the noise of feet and the clattering of billiard-balls told plainly the reason of their absence; anon, another group would disappear, and then I was sure that a faint odour of cigars would blow in from the half-closed window. For me, I bravely resisted every invitation to move from the seat wherein I had so comfortably ensconced myself, being sufficiently occupied, this first evening, in making myself familiar with all the actors in the scene going on around me; and I was well repaid for my self-denial, for at that very moment were assembled, in that old courtly saloon, some of the brightest intellectual luminaries of the kingdom.

"You are fortunate," exclaimed C., as he kindly came to take his seat beside me, "in being a guest with some of our most remarkable illustrations of the ancient *régime*

—men who remain, few in number, to tell the generation of our day what is meant by the ‘wits’ and *beaux-esprits* of a period which, although not distant, yet seems driven centuries back by the rapidity with which new eras, new societies, and new dynasties, have succeeded each other. For instance,” continued he, “there is the Count de M. ; I dare not call him the *old* count, although were age measured by years alone, he would certainly be considered to have well earned the title. He is already past the threescore years and ten fixed by the great Psalmist as the term of man’s life, and yet here he is, more alive, more pungent, more racy than ever. I know of no greater contrast than that which exists between this man and our princely host.

“Look at them as they sit opposite to each other, both intent upon the chances of the game ; the one so calm and dignified, reflecting almost tediously upon the card he ought to play ; then placing it, slowly and deliberately, upon the table. Watch him for ever so long a time, you will detect no symptom of impatience, no gesture of disappointment, as the tricks are carried from the board by his rival. But seldom, even during a run of decided ill luck, have I seen him bite his pale lip slightly and in silence. Now, look at the count : see with what bitter merriment he shoves the cards towards his adversary—how the stinging gibe, the acid *bon mots* fall from his lips, each sufficient to ensure success to a whole act of a modern vaudeville—how he grasps the cards with impatient glee when they have fallen to his share—his keen eye lighting up, and his tall, thin figure rising in his chair, while he pours a burning torrent of witty pun and quolibet into the ear of his neighbour. There is more life in that man, in spite of his years and the hard life he has led, than in a dozen of the poor, stunted, *jeunes Frances* who surround him.

“The prince and M. are like two schoolboys, hating, dreading each other, yet each one feeling that the presence of the other is needed to bring out his own value ; they are steel and flint, by turns giving and receiving blows, and sending up sparks which dazzle the listener

and hold him entranced. The one, cold and reflective, could crush his tormentor, were he but allowed time and opportunity; while the other, by his great presence of mind, never at fault, and his brilliant and pungent satire, will sometimes cause his *friend* to writhe, even while he bears the same placid countenance and the same calm smile.

“An instance of the count’s readiness at repartee,” continued my friend, “occurred this very day at dinner. The prosy old dowager-duchess down yonder, with the lavender satin and the marabout head-gear, had been descanting most lengthily upon her genealogy, during the greater part of the repast. Everybody was yawning most mournfully, and there were certain symptoms in the brilliant hawk’s-eye of M., which told to all who knew him that he was waiting with impatience for a pounce. The opportunity was not long in presenting itself. The poor old duchess, by dint of twaddling on undisturbed, had arrived at the period preceding the revolutionary war—‘At which time,’ said she, ‘some of our family emigrated to Canada, where a branch remains to this very day. I have a cousin there who writes to me sometimes. Her name is *Mousseline*—a curious name, is it not, count?’ appealing to M., whose eyes were fixed upon her with foul intent.

“‘Not at all,’ returned he quickly; ‘I have a cousin called *Batiste*—you have one called *Mousseline*;—rien de plus simple!’

“Of course the whole table was convulsed with laughter. The one object was gained; the prosy old duchess was silenced for the rest of the dinner, and M., elated by his triumph, was more brilliant and witty than ever. He has made a bitter enemy; but what cares he so long as the old proser does not inflict her *ennuyeux bavardage* upon him while she remains. Of this there is no fear, for I overheard her servant mention that her carriage must be ready to depart to-morrow. Life is too short, according to M.’s declaration, to waste it in listening to other people’s *mauvaise prose*.

“The career of the Count M—— has been, like that

of most of the men of note of his own time, checkered with startling gleams of light—with fearful intervals of darkness; but his ready wit and great tact have made him float to this very hour upon the surface of politics, while many of his contemporaries, with infinitely more talent, and certainly more principle, have sunk to rise no more. The man's very life has been, for years past, even to his most intimate friends, a complete mystery. *They* only know that he is ruined. He has been beggared more than once even during the time that I have known him, but has always risen again, more brilliant and more sparkling than ever. His fire seems, verily, unquenchable, for it bursts forth from amid the ashes with which poverty and humiliation would fain seek to smother it, and burns with a brighter glow after each fruitless endeavour that his enemies have made to extinguish it altogether.

“*Mon pauvre ami!*” said one of his *roué* friends to him, after one of the many tornadoes to which during his life he had been exposed—an execution in his house, and his horses all sold—“*mon pauvre ami—que te reste-t-il?*”

“*Moi!*” exclaimed the count, as he turned away, with light, buoyant step and smiling countenance. In less than a year he was again *remonté*, in full credit and full success; his house, as before, the resort of all that was gay and brilliant in the metropolis—himself again the oracle of a wide and fashionable circle. The answer and the result, display the character of the man better than whole pages of written biography could do. His faith lies in his own capacity for turning to account the weakness of others, and never has it been deceived.”

“Who is the tall, thin adversary of the count?” said I, struck with the appearance of the person, as he turned and spoke in a low confidential tone to the prince.

“Oh, that is the Count de F.,” said my friend—“the antiquated beau of Parisian high life. He is the same gay philanderer, the same favoured swain, the object of as many fluttering sighs and tender regrets, as he was thirty years ago, when he was in his prime, or forty

years ago, when he was young. Some people have affixed a nearer relationship between him and the prince than the latter has ever chosen to avow. Be this as it may, the count, whether from this cause, or from the number of years which he has spent in the friendship and society of the Prince de Talleyrand, has imbibed much of his ready wit and cold, sarcastic philosophy, and displays them sometimes at the expense of others, with the same reckless disregard of feelings or *amour propre*. His victims are numerous, but they too are sometimes fully revenged by the prince, with whom he cannot vie, in spite of the florid wit and forked satire in which he will indulge.

“The poor count had well nigh been overwhelmed, sunk for ever, on one occasion, by a witticism of Talleyrand’s which spread over Paris in an incredibly short space, and filled the heart of the poor old dandy with gall and bitterness. The prince had always rallied the count most unmercifully upon his absurd pretensions to youth and gallantry, and yet, in spite of this, so great is the infatuating effect of love, that the latter was foolish and unguarded enough to mention, with great mystery, a new conquest which he had made, and upon which he piqued himself not a little. This time it was a lady of talent, rank, and fashion, and he wished most particularly to *keep* his conquest, now that he had so fairly won it. It was just at the period of the new year, and *étrennes* were flying in every direction.

“‘I should like to give the lady of my heart something that would please her,’ said the count; ‘do assist me, prince; what can I procure that would be most rare—something unique of its kind—something that is but seldom seen, and of which the like could not be brought to her from any body else.’

“The prince appeared to reflect for a moment, and the count waited impatiently for the answer.

“‘I have it—I have it!’ at length exclaimed the prince, joyfully.

“‘What? tell me quickly, I will go this moment and procure it.’

“‘No need to stir,’ returned the prince, drily; ‘give her one of the hairs of your head—if you can;—it must indeed be a thing unique of its kind, and of which none could bring her the fellow.’

“This allusion to the baldness of the antiquated Adonis was irresistible; the *bon mot* was sure to be remembered wherever he appeared, and for a long time it drove him from the society of those who had heard it. It was only when he had *proved* the reality of his pretensions, by the splendid marriage which he made soon afterwards, that he regained confidence, and once more appeared as you now behold him, more soft and Cupid-like, more captivating, and more *papillonnant* than ever.

“The guest who sits opposite to him, his partner in the game, is the celebrated Royer Collard, perhaps, saving our host, the best specimen of the *ancien régime* now existing in the country. As Talleyrand may be taken as type of the old French nobleman, so may Royer Collard be admitted as specimen of the ancient French gentleman. It is a pleasure to look upon that man, and behold in his calm, open eye, and his broad expanse of forehead, denoting at once the union of genius and benevolence, a perfect corroboration of all the good which one has heard from all parties concerning him. Throughout every change and form of government under which he has been called into action, he has been remarkable for his inflexible integrity. No swerving—no deviation—no compromise—but straightforward has he marched, without flinching, in the path which he had chosen. It was he who applied to Guizot the epithet which it is said so diverted the king. ‘*Austère intriquant!*’ exclaimed he, when he heard that Guizot had again accepted office, after his express determination not to act with the then existing government. The *mot* flew from mouth to mouth, and, whether correct or not, was at least *successful*, which is everything in Paris.

“I firmly believe Royer Collard to be a true and interested friend of the prince. In Paris, they live much together; scarcely a single day being suffered to pass without his paying his visit at the Hôtel Talleyrand.

Perhaps he is the only person amid the crowd by whom the prince is surrounded, in whom the latter places perfect reliance, because, with his keen judgment and great knowledge of human nature, he knows well enough that he is the only one with whom interest will yield to friendship.

“Of course,” proceeded my friend C., “the château is sometimes visited, like every other château in the kingdom, by all the ‘*fâcheux*’ and the ‘*importuns*’ of the country round, and the prince, being in a more elevated position than his neighbours, has also more than their share of hospitality to bestow. Just observe yonder old gentleman with the powdered head, looking over M.’s cards, with a knowing air. That is a near neighbour of the prince, to whom he is compelled by policy to do the honours of the house. It is impossible to behold a better type of the ‘Berrichon,’ whom their own George Sand has so aptly described as ‘*moitié ours, moitié mouton*.’ His estate joins that of Valençay; part of it can be seen from the windows of the gallery of the château, and, on looking thence the other day, he exclaimed to the Count de M., who was admiring it, ‘*Mon Dieu, comte!* just think: if I had only had the misfortune to lose my father last year, I might have bought all the land right away to the left, and made the place worth having.” A whole written volume could not paint the Berrichon character more clearly than this single speech. It is verily believed, that were the thing permitted by law, the Berrichon would throw his own children into the balance, if it were necessary to complete a good bargain in the disposal of his sheep.

“You would be much diverted were you to witness all the intriguing and manœuvring that is going forward among the *propriétaires* and *gentilâtres* of this part of the country; to gain admission here. This château is looked upon with wonder and awe, and its broad bastions and Moorish towers are fabled through the province to contain more dark secrets and more hidden mysteries than ever were confided to the grim keeping of the Bastile or the Seven Towers. A short time ago, the Mayor of

C., a large town of this province, at some little distance from this, was invited by the prince to dine at the château, and, as the roads were bad, and the nights without moon, he was courteously asked to delay his return home until the following morning. You may imagine the sudden increase of importance, the sudden puffing of pride, with which the worthy mayor accepted the invitation, and also the parting injunctions of *madame son épouse*, to bring back to her and her daughters the long history of all the wondrous deeds which were going forward inside those aristocratic walls—a sealed mystery which, from their own experience, they knew that they could never hope to solve.

“It so happened that, on the very morning of the day so rife with expectation to the poor mayor, Comte Molé had arrived at Valençay. Nothing could be more propitious, and the worthy official rubbed his hands with glee, at the thought of the immense information he should gain, by listening to the conversation of two such distinguished politicians—of the awful importance of his position with regard to his colleagues at the *conseil* at home—of the delight and pride of his ambitious wife, while she listened to the detail of all her husband had heard concerning the secret affairs of the nation; in short, the honest *bourgeois* felt, from the very moment of his arrival, that tremulous, uncertain kind of emotion (one hardly knows whether to call it pain or pleasure) which precedes in most minds the realization of some dream which has long been nursed and fostered with great care.

“Dinner passed away; the honest functionary, all eyes and ears to what was going forward, listened intently on every side to catch the least significant observation which should fall, either from the lips of his host or of the illustrious guest. But it was in vain he strained his hearing, listening so intently that his neighbour was once or twice compelled to remind him of the dish before him; not a word of politics was breathed during the whole repast; and when once, during a short silence which occurred, he ventured, in a timid voice, to ask

the prince if he thought the Belgian monarchy would be of long duration, he was merely answered by a request to take more champagne, and the conversation once more resumed its light and frivolous tone. Wit there was in abundance; sparkling showers, and bold satire, and learning too; but the '*maire de son endroit*' cared not for all the good things which were flying past him from one end of the table to the other, and convulsing every listener with bursts of hearty laughter; he smiled not, poor man, but rather sat lost in painful wonder, that the great ones of the earth should thus lose the precious hours in idle bantering and unseemly mirth! But he hoped that, once in the *salon*, the conversation might at length fall into a more serious and profitable vein, and he had already taken his place close to the prince, determined to catch each syllable that fell from his lips, when Count Molé approached. This he felt sure would happen; of course, it could not chance otherwise. At length, Count Molé approached, and leant over the back of the prince's chair. He spoke, in the very ear of the prince, a confidential whisper, which the mayor heard, however, distinctly, so close had he drawn to the illustrious friends.

"'Prince,' said the count; 'have you forgotten old times and all our fierce encounters?' Come, and renew our skill at billiards in the next room; it will make us both all the younger by twenty years!"

"Billiards! the Prince de Talleyrand play at billiards! it could not be; he should have imagined that his lameness would have saved him from *that*. Yet so it was; the Prince de Talleyrand *did* play at billiards; and, in spite of his lameness, was considered one of the most expert players of his day; and so the poor mayor sat the long evening through, discomfited and unhappy, with nothing to tell his wife, and nothing to report to the town council, when next it should meet. The disappointment was almost too bitter to be borne.

"Hope, however, did not desert him. He well knew that the prince and his noble guest could not play at billiards the whole night, so he sat awhile waiting with

patience, until they should grow tired of the game, and return to the fireside. And they *did* return as he had foreseen, and they *did* seat themselves comfortably, one on each side of the chimney. ‘Now will they discuss their latest protocols,’ thought the little mayor, as he rubbed his hands in glee. No; the prince was in high spirits, for he had won at billiards. The count was in high spirits, too, for he declared he had *let* him win; and the whole conversation was engrossed by the discussion—eternal thrust and parry—attack and *repartee*—which had so worried the mayor at dinner, and of which he could not at all see the wit—not he.

“‘At last he was growing quite beside himself, when the prince arose; which action was the signal that the *soirée* was concluded, and that the different guests were free to retire. Yet he had not heard one single word of politics! What would he have to say at the *conseil*? What could he tell his wife? *She* would greet him with reproaches on his return home, and would say that such introductions to the great were of little use, unless he knew better how to profit by them; for he felt that, were he to talk till doomsday, he never should be able to persuade her that he had heard not one word of politics. She would accuse him of having napped, as he always did, and always would do, despite her admonition.

“Well, the guests all withdrew; our excellent mayor among the number; but, as he passed the screen down yonder at the door, upon turning back to take a wistful glance at the blazing hearth, he perceived the count reseat himself in the great arm-chair which he had quitted but for an instant, and the prince ensconced once more in the one he had occupied all the evening; he saw the latter draw forward a little *guéridon* which stood near, place upon it a roll of papers which he took from his pocket, and pointing to them, he heard him say to the count—‘You see we have *besogne* enough before us. I hope you are not sleepy?’

“The curiosity, the ambition, the *amour propre* of the poor mayor were all roused, and forgetting the risk he

was about to incur—in short, forgetting all but the opportunity of retrieving lost time—he slid himself into a chair which stood most invitingly near the door, in the shadow of the screen, and prepared to listen with due attention. There was a pause, however, during which the prince rose slightly in his chair, to reach down one of the flambeaux from the mantel-piece. The mayor stretched forward eagerly, when his horror may be guessed; for, instead of unrolling the mysterious budget, the prince turned to the count, and said, ‘Before we begin upon this business, let us conclude the affair we were speaking of before dinner. I am sorry that you have reason to suspect the disaffection of the municipal council of our town; if so, I think you are quite right to have it remodelled. Whom did you say you would like to replace the mayor?’

“The functionary started, and uttered a deep groan, which no doubt prevented him from hearing the count’s answer; but the prince again spoke, and asked his friend what he thought of the present one. Of course, the answer was most humiliating for the poor victim, telling of apparent inaptitude for the office, of his impertinent familiarity, and of his eager, inconvenient curiosity—until the unfortunate actually writhed with the pain each word inflicted.

“When the unwelcome harangue was concluded, the prince arose to take a caraffe of water from the console. The poor mayor was in an awful fright, for the action brought the prince immediately opposite to where he sat, trembling and perspiring from head to foot. The prince poured the water into a tumbler and drank it off, and was about retiring to his seat, when his eye fell upon the figure of the poor little mayor, who would gladly at that moment have been a hundred feet below the earth.

“‘Ah! Monsieur L.’ exclaimed he, ‘why, in the name of Heaven, have you been thus neglected? Ring, M. de Molé, here is our worthy friend L. actually freezing behind the screen, while waiting for some one to conduct him to his chamber. ‘*Mille pardons*, Mon-

sieur L., for this extraordinary neglect on the part of the servants.'

"The valet-de-chambre appeared.

"'Conduct Monsieur L. immediately to his chamber,' said the prince significantly, 'and see that the like forgetfulness never happens again with any of the visitors to this house. *Bon soir, M. le Maire, bonne nuit, et dormez bien!*'

"The trembling culprit hurried off without uttering a word, so great was his confusion, and departed the next morning at daybreak for his own home.

"It is needless to say that the story of his removal from office was a hoax. The prince, in rising to reach the light from the chimney, had descried, in the looking-glass, the shadow of a figure on the opposite wall. His quick perceptions enabled him at once to guess to whom it belonged, from remembrance of the mayor's uneasy curiosity, and indiscreet listening to all that passed during dinner, and he felt determined to punish the mean and cowardly listener. A wink at the count was sufficient; *he* was not one to refuse a hint, and together they thus fooled the victim to their heart's content. The story got abroad, and created great laughter throughout the whole country, and, as might be expected, the little Mayor of C. was ere long caricatured, pamphleted, and paragraphed into resigning, and it was only then that he was allowed to live in peace, and to forget his fatal visit to Valençay."

As my friend concluded his story, the whist-table broke up, and the prince rising, moved towards the fire, where we were seated, and took the arm-chair which was always reserved for him. I must confess that at that identical moment I could enter into the feelings of the worthy Mayor of C., for I, too, longed for the moment when he would expand, and share with us some of the varied riches of anecdote with which his mind was stored.

It needed but a single spark to fire the train: the prince was *en verve* that evening, and I verily believe a whole volume might be filled with the bare leaves and

cuttings of the "Flowers of Rhetoric," with which he charmed us. If he did not possess, like the antique poet of Dante's vision, the power of carrying us into the nether regions, his charm was greater still; for with a beck he conjured up the shadows he wished us to behold, and made them pass in long array before us. One or two of the anecdotes I will relate, for the benefit of my readers, but they must not expect to find one jot of the *manner* of the narrator—the piquancy, the *verve*, the irresistible charm which made the Prince de Talleyrand avowedly the first story-teller of his day. If I can give but a faint idea of the style of conversation which enlivened the long evenings of autumn beneath the princely domes of Valençay, it will be as much as I can hope to accomplish, for the very warmth and vivacity of the prince's manner of relating renders it impossible to repeat his words, and memory fails to retrace the fairy chain by which imagination was so sportively held captive and enthralled.

The conversation had turned upon bonnie Scotland, and the prince, amid many regrets at his inability to visit the land where dwelt so many of his best friends, expressed much curiosity respecting divers usages and customs of the Scotch, some of which are so unlike those of any other nation on the face of the globe. Among other things, he said he had ever felt an eager desire to witness an example of second sight, and asked me many questions concerning this extraordinary gift: to which I was happily enabled to answer in a satisfactory manner, from having heard in my own family of many illustrations of this peculiarity, all witnessed and backed by the evidence of sundry old nurses and attendants, who had been for ages in the family, and of course believed without inquiry. My poor anecdotes, rough and uncouth as they were, seemed to interest the company—this kind of superstition being a thing unknown among the French, who, if they are gifted with the most florid wit, have certainly the driest imaginations of any people in Europe.

"Somnambulism, and the waking sleep, might ac-

count for the origin of such a wild belief," said one of the company.

"Or the faculty of fixing the mind with straining energy on one point," said another.

"Or, perhaps, the sudden light—the quick, vivid flash, which reveals to some strong and powerful minds the POSSIBLE, the TRUE," said the prince.

"I remember," continued he, "upon one occasion, having been gifted for one single instant with this unknown and nameless power. I know not, to this moment, whence it came; it has never once returned; and yet, upon that one occasion, it saved my life; without that sudden and mysterious inspiration, I should not now be here to tell the tale. I had freighted a ship in concert with my friend Beaumetz. He was a good fellow, Beaumetz, with whom I had ever lived on the most intimate terms; and in those stormy times, when it needed not only friendship to bind men together, but almost godlike courage to dare to show that friendship, I could not but prize most highly all his bold and loyal demonstrations of kindness and attachment to me. I had not a single reason to doubt his friendship; on the contrary, he had given me, on several occasions, most positive proofs of his sincere devotion to my interests and well-being. We had fled from France together, we had arrived at New York together, and together we had lived in perfect harmony during our stay there. So, after having resolved upon improving the little money that was left us by speculation, it was still in partnership and together that we freighted a small vessel for India, trusting all to the goodly chance which had befriended us in our escape from danger and from death, to venture once more *together* to brave the storms and perils of a yet longer and more adventurous voyage.

Everything was embarked for our departure; bills were all paid and farewells all taken, and we were waiting for a fair wind with most eager expectation—being prepared to embark at any hour of the day or night in obedience to the warning of the captain. This state of uncertainty seemed to irritate the temper of poor Beau-

metz to an extraordinary degree, and, unable to remain quietly at home, he hurried to and from the city, with an eager, restless activity which at times excited my astonishment, for he had ever been remarkable for great calmness and placidity of temper.

One day, he entered our lodging, evidently labouring under great excitement, although commanding himself to appear calm. I was engaged at the moment writing letters to Europe, and, looking over my shoulder, he said, with forced gaiety, 'What need to waste time in penning those letters? they will never reach their destination. Come with me, and let us take a turn on the Battery; perhaps the wind may be chopping round; we may be nearer our departure than we imagine.'

"The day was very fine, although the wind was blowing hard, and I suffered myself to be persuaded. Beaumetz, I remembered afterwards, displayed an unusual officiousness in aiding me to close my desk and put away my papers, handing me, with hurried eagerness, my hat and cane, and doing other little services to quicken my departure, which at the time I attributed to the restless desire for change, the love of activity, with which he seemed to have been devoured during the whole period of our delay. We walked through the crowded streets to the Battery. He had seized my arm, and hurried me along, seemingly in eager haste to advance. When we had arrived on the broad esplanade—the glory then, as now, of the city of New York, Beaumetz quickened his step yet more, until we arrived close to the water's edge. He talked loud and quickly, admiring in energetic terms the beauty of the scenery, the Brooklyn Heights, the shady groves of the island, the ships riding at anchor, and the busy scene on the peopled wharf; when suddenly he paused in his mad, incoherent discourse, for I had freed my arm from his grasp, and stood immovable before him. Staying his wild and rapid steps, I fixed my eyes upon his face. He *turned aside, cowed and dismayed*. 'Beaumetz,' I shouted, '*you mean to murder me—you intend to throw me from the height into the sea below. Deny it, monster, if you can!*'

“ The maniac stared at me for a moment, but I took especial care not to avert my gaze from his countenance, and he quailed beneath it. He stammered a few incoherent words, and strove to pass me, but I barred his passage with extended arms. He looked vacantly right and left, and then flung himself upon my neck, and burst into tears. ‘ ’Tis true—’tis true, my friend. The thought has haunted me day and night, like a flash from the lurid fire of hell. It was for this I brought you here. Look, you stand within a foot of the edge of the parapet—in another instant, the work would have been done!’

“ The demon had left him ; his eye was still unsettled, and the white foam stood in bubbles on his parched lips, but he was no longer tossed by the same mad excitement under which he had been labouring so long, for he suffered me to lead him home without a single word. A few days’ repose and silence, bleeding and abstinence, completely restored him to his former self, and, what is most extraordinary, the circumstance was never mentioned between us. My FATE was at work. It was during those few days of watching beside the bedside of poor Beaumetz, that I received the letters from France which announced to me the revocation of the decree which had sent me a wanderer to America. The *Directoire* had relented, and I was invited to return with all speed. I sought not to resist the appeal, and at once decided on leaving Beaumetz to prosecute our speculation alone, and on returning to Paris immediately.

“ The blow was cruel to poor Beaumetz, who was fully persuaded, I have no doubt, that it was in dread of another attack on his part that I had now the wish to leave him. No argument I could make use of, no assurances of unchanged friendship could shake his opinion, and our parting was a most stormy and painful one. I made over to him my interest in the ship, which we had freighted together, and he departed for India, while I bent my course once more towards my *belle France*.

“ Once more in a position to assist my friends, my first thought was of Beaumetz, and one of my first acts was the cancelling of his death-warrant. I wrote to him

to announce the joyful news, addressing my letter to the merchant at Calcutta, to whom he had been recommended. In due time, receiving no answer, I wrote again ; but my letters were returned, with the information that the ship, which had sailed from New York some months before, and of which M. Beaumetz was supercargo, had not arrived, that no tidings had been received of its fate, and that great fears were entertained for its total loss. The apprehension was justified, *for from that day to this no tidings have ever been received of the ship, nor, alas ! of my poor friend Beaumetz !*"

The prince paused a moment, seeming to collect his sad remembrances of Beaumetz, and I could not but admire the singular good fortune which had caused him to abandon his voyage to India. How different might have been the fate of France—nay, of Europe, had he sailed in that ship ! Well may he have gained among his friends the title of "Fortune's master !"

"But what was really the motive of your first suspicion of the murderous intent of Beaumetz ?" said one of the company.

"I know not to this very hour," replied the Prince de Talleyrand ; "it was not his eye, for I was not looking at him at the moment, I was gazing at the sublime view which he himself was pointing out to my notice ;—it was not in the tone of his voice either, in which lay the warning of my danger ; it was a sudden and mysterious impulse, for which I have never been able to account—one of those startling and fearful mysteries which even the strongest minds are contented to accept without inquiry, being satisfied that such things are, and never daring to ask wherefore. Many persons, the *Illuminés*, for example, who ruled the *monde philosophique* for so long a period, have ascribed this sudden revelation of the hidden TRUTH entirely to the effects of magnetism ; and there are instances well known, wherein the great masters of the art have been able to produce the same effect at pleasure. Cagliostro, to whom I once mentioned the circumstance, had often obtained the same results by his wonderful powers of magnetism."

“What, *mon prince*, have you ever seen Cagliostro?” exclaimed the fair Duchess de V., raising her head from her tapestry frame, and gazing into the prince’s face, with an amusing expression of wonder and of awe.

“Ay, that have I,” returned the prince, gravely; “often have I seen him, fair lady; and am not of those who condemn him at once, without examination, unthinkingly, as an impostor; for the man *believed* himself: no wonder, then, that he could so easily persuade others.”

“Oh, now, do tell us something about this Cagliostro!” exclaimed the young duchess, shaking back her fair ringlets, as she leant eagerly forward, and laid her white and jewelled hand upon the elbow of the prince’s chair; “do tell us all about your interview with the famous magician; but mind, tell us the truth. Where did he live?—how did he look?—what did he wear?”

“Nay,” returned the prince, smiling, “were I to tell all I know concerning him, my story would not be done till to-morrow night, at this same hour.”

We all involuntarily followed the direction of his gaze towards the clock upon the mantel-piece. Alas! the hand was wearing round, and stood within a very few minutes of the hour of one.

“We must defer the story of Cagliostro’s wonders till another time,” said he; “but you shall not lose by waiting. *Vous n’y perdrez rien, madame*. But you shall sleep *this* night, at least, in peace; which you might never do again should you happen to *believe*!” So, messieurs, *bonne nuit—à demain*.

He arose. Of course the whole assembly followed the movement; and in a few moments each one had retired.

My chamber was in one of the turrets which form the corner towers of the château, and, by a most singular piece of good fortune, I found that it was close to that of my friend. We lingered some few minutes, taper in hand, upon the threshold: and with his usual kindness, C. proposed to me, as he took his leave for the night, to conduct me through the château and grounds on the morrow.

“We are all independent here,” said he; “you must not feel surprised if you are left to cater for your own amusement until dinner, for each one does what is right in his own eyes, and the morrow’s plans are determined on before night; so that interlopers must necessarily be excluded, for the first day at least. But you shall not be quite abandoned; I will be with you betimes in the morning, and we shall have ample occupation for a long day, in wandering over the beauties of this place, which must some day become one of the most celebrated spots in our country.”

He left me, and I soon sank to sleep, dreaming of all I had seen and heard, and with anticipations, too, of what more I was to see and hear before I took my departure from Valençay.

CHAPTER II.

CONDUCT OF TALLEYRAND AT THE REVOLUTION OF
1830.

It will be readily believed that I needed no arousing on the morrow. In spite of my weary journey, and the late hour of retiring to rest, I was up and *sur pied* long before my friend had left his chamber. The morning was beautiful; and from my window it was pleasant to watch the departure of the hounds and sportsmen from the court-yard to the green forest. For my part, however, I felt no envy, but rather stood wondering that people endowed with the sense of hearing could endure with patience the eternal twang of the *cor de chasse*, of all sounds, I verily believe, the most fatiguing and abominable.

I went down to await C. upon the green *pelouse*, which lay so invitingly before my window; and I paused to look up with interest at the broad frontage of the château, which lay in the light of the morning sun, whose beams, reflected on the shining domes of the huge Moorish towers, made the whole building bring to mind some rich and sumptuous palace of the Levant. It was the delight of the prince to say that “many were the

seigneurs of the country who could put forth the old feudal boast of *pignon sur rue*, and *donjon sur roche*, but that it was reserved for him to display the broad flanking towers of the Turkish serai or Moorish generalife. It was not long before I was aroused from my gaze of admiration by my friend, who came bounding over the grass to meet me. He smiled as he beheld the reverential look I fixed upon the window which he had pointed out as belonging to the chamber of the prince, where the drawn curtains and closed *jalousies* announced the profound repose in which its inmate was still buried.

"You are like the rest of the world," said he, taking my arm. "I know that at this moment you are nursing all kinds of fancies, the one more absurd and '*banal*' than the other, concerning the old diplomat's sleeping visions, which already I have seen compared in one of the newspapers to the '*slumbers of the rattlesnake*, or the solitary dreamings of the hyana waiting for his prey, and sure that it cannot escape his cruel jaws.' Nothing," continued he, "can be more unjust than the opinions formed of the extreme cunning of the character of Prince Talleyrand, of the far sight of his self-interest, of his habitual deception. They add another example to the many on record of most extraordinary popular delusions. No man was ever, perhaps, more influenced by the circumstances of the moment, and less resolved upon the course he would pursue until the time arrived for action, than the prince. The conduct which he pursued during the events of the revolution of July has fully proved this; and when you and I have time and privacy, I think I could win you over to my opinion."

"And why not at this moment?" said I. "The occasion is among the best. We are alone, and scarcely likely to be interrupted; and, while we wander across the park, I can listen with as much attention as though we were closeted together in the most silent chamber of the château."

C. took my arm and moved forward.

"I can but give you my own impressions concerning

the opinions of Prince Talleyrand during the eventful struggle of the three days," said he; "but you may rely upon the truth of my statement of the *facts* which took place upon that occasion. I was present with him during the whole time, an eye-witness to the various emotions by which he was governed, and could judge, as far as my own powers of observation went, of the divers motives by which he was actuated."

As such, I give my friend's opinions to the reader, begging him to remember that they are those of one who knew Prince Talleyrand well, who had been admitted to his intimacy for many years before his death, and that they may be of value, as furnishing the interpretation of many things hitherto problematical.

"Many people," continued my friend, "have been led by the political writers of the day into error, concerning the real causes of the revolution of July; they are eager to represent the courage and patriotism displayed by the liberal party on that occasion of sudden and spontaneous explosion of popular fury, as the effect of a deeply-laid plot, conceived for many months before; and they seek to impress the public with a false idea of the diplomacy of the *chefs de parti* in the triumphs of the three days. Another idea which has become as general is, that the statesman who had played so conspicuous a part in all our revolutions, from that of 1789 to that of 1830, and had lent with such good grace to each successive government the aid of his splendid talents—whose word, indeed, seemed to decide upon their very existence—was no stranger to the struggles and intrigues which ended in the downfall of Charles X., and the banishment of his dynasty from the soil of France. Without pretending here either to condemn or justify the conduct pursued by Prince Talleyrand under other governments, and which history, freed by time from party spirit and from political passion, will alone be able to judge with equity, let us examine coolly the part he took in the revolution of July. *Facts* may serve better than *opinions*, to enable the observer to

judge with more correctness the character of this great man, so little known, in reality, even at the present time.

“It cannot be denied that, at the period to which I now refer (1830), the opinions of M. de Talleyrand were most unfavourable to the government of Charles X. Like every other man of sense and foresight throughout the kingdom, he beheld with dread the dissolution of the Martignac ministry, and the substitution of the Polignac administration; but such political inconsistencies could not astonish, coming from a man of the stamp of Charles X., whose whole life had been a tissue of inconsistencies, from the famous protest of the Count d’Artois, upon the occasion of the States-General in 1789, to the fatal appointment of the ministry which was to send him forth a second time to emigration, from which he had returned once before, according to Prince Talleyrand’s own expression, long previous to the catastrophe, *‘having learnt little and forgotten nothing.’* M. de Talleyrand, nevertheless, did ample justice to the many good qualities which distinguished the king in private life, and the more he overwhelmed him with contempt as a *chef de parti*, the more he was pleased to acknowledge in him a feeling and generous nature, and a faithful and grateful friend. In point of real and sterling worth he placed him far above his brother Louis XVIII., whom he accused of ‘having no friends—only favourites,’ and who in his whole life never had the heart to grant a pardon to a single criminal. The one was a better king, the other a far better man.

“Charles X., however, returned tenfold in hatred and suspicion all the pity and contempt which the wily diplomatist sought to cast upon his government; and moreover, the devout monarch never could forget that the Bishop of Autun had renounced the Church, and had married, in spite of the threatened excommunication and eternal damnation voted by Rome as the punishment of such a step; for, although Pope Pius VII. had absolved the bishop from his vows of priesthood, it was never without a thrill of horror that the king beheld

on court days his grand chamberlain, who seldom failed on occasions of ceremony and etiquette to present himself before his royal master, in spite of the cold reception he met with in the court circles, where his tottering gait and sarcastic speech had earned for him the sobriquet of '*Le Diable Boiteux*.' The king, blinded by prejudice, even forgot, in this instance, the papal authority; for the marriage of the prince had been sanctioned by the Pope, and was therefore legal in the eyes of the most pious Catholics.

"Nevertheless, at the epoch of the Martignac administration, it seemed as if a kind of *rapprochement* had taken place, if not between M. de Talleyrand and the king, at least between the former and the ministry. The men who composed this ministry* all of them possessed a degree of moderation in their political opinions, which M. de Talleyrand could not but admire, and, wishing to prove that until then he had been opposed, not to the king's government, but to the principles of the ministry who had conducted it, he sought by every means to show publicly his sympathy for the new ministers. He was seen once more to frequent the ministerial salons, and received the ministers at his own hotel with that *haute politesse* and courtly urbanity for which he was so distinguished, expressing upon every occasion the satisfaction which he felt at seeing the helm of public affairs at last in the grasp of men whose experience rendered them able to comprehend the exigencies of the country, and possessed of resources enabling them to provide the most efficient means of meeting them. This satisfaction was but of short duration. In the month of August following, Charles X., yielding to the instigations of his secret counsellors, who worked upon his unenlightened conscience—taking, himself, undue alarm at the first check sustained by the *ministère* Martignac in the Chamber of Deputies—replaced

* M. de Martignac . . . Interieur.
 De la Ferronaye . . . Affaires Etrangères.
 Feutrier Cultes.
 Portalis Justice.

the members of his cabinet by the Polignac administration. Throughout the kingdom there arose a cry of indignation at this step.

“M. de Talleyrand, grieved to see the false line of conduct into which the king was falling, but incapacitated from affording help, and moreover, assailed each day by some new vexation, took advantage of a short illness to withdraw for awhile from court, in order to restore his health at the château of his niece, the Duchess de Dino, at Rochecotte, in Touraine, where he resolved to pass the ensuing winter.

“Various have been the motives attributed to this retirement at Rochecotte. I am aware that many of the public papers have asserted, and other writers of graver stamp have repeated, that it was during this winter that the plan of attack against Charles X. was conceived and matured, between the *chefs* of the liberal party and M. de Talleyrand, who, according to general belief, had engaged himself to lend them the aid of his counsel and high influence.

“What gave some little colouring to these reports was the fact, that M. de Talleyrand reckoned among his most intimate friends some of the most violent members of the opposition, who, at the moment of the revolution of 1830, by the force of circumstances, found themselves at the head of the new code of things which they had so long and so ardently desired, and which, after all, was established without their direct influence, as will be proved by a bare recital of facts. Thus, M. de Talleyrand received into his daily intimacy General Sébastiani, the Duc de Broglie, M. Villemain, M. Bertin de Vaux, and M. Molé; all of whom, however, remained passive spectators of the struggle, until the moment when the chance turned in favour of the popular party. There was one man, however, who took an active part in the revolutionary movement, who had prepared and ordered its march by his attacks in the journal of which he was principal editor, and whom M. de Talleyrand encouraged and distinguished by most particular favour. It was, indeed, at Rochecotte, during the month of May, which

Thiers spent there with M. de Talleyrand, that he conceived the plan of those terrific articles in the *National*, which every morning, like the battering-ram of ancient warfare, laid in ruins the wretched bulwarks behind which the tottering monarchy thought itself secure.

“Thiers, in fact, did conspire against the government of Charles X.; but it was conspiracy not with this leader or with that; not with such and such a party; but with the immense majority of the nation, to whom he spoke the language they had seldom heard, and which they all could understand; the language of their old affections and of their craving need. But thence to argue that M. Thiers came to Rochecotte to concert with M. de Talleyrand the plan of the *National*, and the overthrow of the government, would be to make M. de Talleyrand play a part much beneath him. It must also be remembered that Thiers was at that time a sub-editor of the *Constitutionnel*, and that nothing foretold in him the future President of Louis Philippe’s council. His History of the Revolution, full as it was of false ideas and monstrous principles, thanks to some few narratives of interest, and to the great name of Napoleon, which is retraced in grand and noble characters, had established for its author a certain reputation in the literary world. But of a surety, M. de Talleyrand, notwithstanding the high opinion he entertained of the talents of Thiers as a man of business, would have been much astonished if, at that period, in his salon at Rochecotte, some modern Cassandra had predicted that the author of the “*Revolution Française*” would one day become Prime Minister and Chief of the French cabinet! M. de Talleyrand, with all his boasted perspicacity, his foresight, and his *justesse d’esprit*, would have considered it as a *mauvaise plaisanterie* that a man *sans position sociale*, an *homme de rien*, should ever be considered eligible as a leader of public affairs in a country like France.

“M. Thiers was, in the eyes of M. de Talleyrand, nothing more than a young writer, full of vigour and talent, whom the old seigneur loved to protect, and to initiate into the manners and customs of good society,

without a knowledge of which (he would often say) there can be no good taste in literature. But he was the last person in the world who, at that time, could have looked upon Thiers as a conspirator, of whom he was making himself, by such protection, the vile associate.

“The men of July, whether to curry favour with the new dynasty, or to assume the part of profound politicians, have pretended that they had prepared the fall of Charles X., and they boast that their machinations had aroused the tempest which, in three short days, swallowed up a whole generation of kings. These men have either sought to deceive public opinion, or else have been themselves grossly deceived. Nothing was ever more unlike a conspiracy than the Revolution of 1830; or if conspiracy *did* exist, it was public, general, and unanimous; one in which the whole country bore a part, saving only that small portion of the community bound by ties of honour and gratitude to the elder branch of the House of Bourbon. In fact, there was not a single human being endowed with sense, from one end of France to the other, who, even long before the issuing of the fatal ‘Ordonnances’ of July, could not have foretold whither the multifarious blunders of Charles X.’s government were hurling the monarchy; but not a soul had the slightest presentiment that the day of reckoning was so nigh; and, as proof of this, it may be remembered that those men of talent most opposed to the Restoration, such as M.M. Pasquier, Molé, Royer-Collard, Sébastiani, De Barante, Guizot, De Broglie, and many others, were struck as by a thunderbolt at the first news of those accursed ‘Ordonnances.’

“Among these men stood first and foremost M. de Talleyrand, who could scarcely credit the *Moniteur Officiel* which contained them. To assert, then, that M. de Talleyrand conspired against the Bourbons—that by his *liaisons* with the opposition, and above all, with the Duke of Orleans, he brought on the fall of the elder branch, and the rise of the younger (which it may be allowed he had long foretold)—proves a total ignorance of the circumstances in which M. de Talleyrand was

placed, and adds one more to the numerous calumnies which it has been the pleasure of so many writers to heap upon the head of this celebrated statesman. But, if the prince did not absolutely rush to meet the events of July, it cannot be denied that, with his accustomed tact, he knew how to profit by the *faits accomplis*, and that, being once certain of the flight of Charles X., he pointed out, with the rare sagacity with which he was gifted, and which age had rather increased than diminished, to his old friend the Duke of Orleans, the line of conduct to be pursued in order to avoid, amid the stormy tides by which he was beset, seeking to steer his course against the will of the people.

“It has been to this day a matter of speculation whether the Duke of Orleans had anticipated being called to the throne, or whether it was the force of circumstances which had brought him to it. These are the facts:—although the Duke of Orleans had for a long time looked upon the event of a change in the dynasty as *possible*, and was most certainly *prepared* to place the crown upon his own head in case of such an event, yet even so late as the 30th of July, he hesitated to grasp it, and resisted the arguments and persuasions of Thiers. It is a known fact that the duke was concealed in the environs of Neuilly, in fear of a popular outbreak, when a secret message from M. de Talleyrand, which he received on the evening of that day, caused him to decide at length upon re-entering Paris, and proclaiming himself Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom—the Head of the new Power. The new king soon forgot, however, this proof of attachment on the part of his old friend; and M. de Talleyrand, who knew that kings, even when chosen by the will of the people, are, for the most part, compelled to be *illustres ingrats*, never, during the years which followed these events, alluded to the circumstances which brought about the *avènement* of Louis Philippe.”

Nevertheless, as it is entirely to this secret influence of Prince Talleyrand, which swayed the decision of the Duke of Orleans, that France is indebted for the new dynasty, it may be interesting to the reader to give,

from the authority of one who was with the prince during the memorable days, and the truth of whose statements may be relied on, some account of what took place on that occasion.

"M. de Talleyrand," continued C., "was, at the time, in his hotel in the Rue St. Florentin, and, on the first day, before any one could foretel the issue of the terrible drama which had just begun, far from displaying any degree of sympathy for the resistance which was beginning to be organized in every quarter of Paris, he looked on with a feeling of terror at the unchaining of the populace; for he had often said, that "neither experience nor prophecy could ever calculate the chances of a dawning revolution. Would the people, when once let loose in the revolutionary arena, renew the bloody scenes of '93, or would they pause before the memory of that dread, terrific epoch? Could any one, at that hour, have dared to hope that Paris would have given to the world the sole example in history of a roused and angry multitude, staying its tide of fury even in the midst of intoxicating triumph?"

"M. de Talleyrand *did not* foresee this possibility. The souvenirs of youth came back upon his age, and showed him the people conquering, using and abusing the right that conquest gives: pillaging the hotels of the *noblesse*, and, in bloody triumph, sparing no superiority, either of station, rank, or fortune; and, it might be also, if the truth were known, trembling himself to be the first victim of popular rage: for he knew that the people loved him not: he had been the instrument of the restoration of the Bourbons. Such were the thoughts which occupied the mind of M. de Talleyrand during the first of these days, and, with those who can bear witness to the uneasiness which he betrayed during those hours of doubt and terror, he is perfectly exonerated from the suspicion of having *prepared* the change which was taking place before his eyes.

"On the second day, the 28th, when the people were combating against the king's troops for the possession of the *Hôtel de Ville*, while the air was filled with the old

and dreaded sounds, the cannon's roar, the tocsin's boom, his confidence in the success of the king's power of defence forsook him at once, and he then pronounced the memorable sentence which has since become familiar to the readers of French literature: 'The cannon which is fired against the people cannot but shake the sovereign's throne.' At the moment when the tocsin announced the triumph of the people at the Hôtel de Ville, he looked at the clock upon the mantelpiece. It was then just upon the stroke of five. 'A few minutes more,' exclaimed he, 'and Charles X. is no longer King of France.'

"One good instance of his presence of mind occurred at this very moment, for he turned to his valet-de-chambre, and made him immediately collect together the men-servants of the hotel, and take down the words 'HOTEL TALLEYRAND,' which flaunted in large golden characters over the gateway, the feudal pride of other times.

"I still maintain the perfect conviction that, even up to the very hour of which I speak, he was undecided as to the course he would adopt; he was evidently waiting for the issue of the struggle. Public rumour has lent him a *bon mot*, which is certainly in his style, although I was with him the whole day, and did not hear him pronounce it.

"Hark! the tocsin ceases—we triumph!"

"*We!* who, mon prince?"

"Chut, not a word! I will tell you that to-morrow."

"If his secret wishes were really in favour of a new order of things, with his habitual prudence, he made it a duty to conceal them; and he spent the whole of the second day, fixed at the windows of the drawing-room of the hotel, which looks into the Place Louis Quinze, sending every now and then his emissaries into the divers quarters of Paris, to bring back accounts of the progress of the revolution. MM. de Broglie, Bertin de Vaux, and Sébastiani were with him, and all, excepting the prince, were of opinion that the king would attempt, before the morning, to re-enter Paris at the head of his

troops. *He* knew the character of the man too well either to hope or to fear this decision.

"On the 29th, however, when M. de Talleyrand began to be convinced that the cause of the revolution was triumphant, that the liberal deputies, Casimir P rier, Laffitte, Lafayette, all, not only pronounced themselves in its favour, but sought to direct the insurrection, and to place themselves at its head, he felt at once the immense advantage that such a demonstration would give to the Chamber of Deputies over the Chamber of Peers; and his only thought during the whole day was to collect together at his own house the few men of intelligence among the peers of the opposition, in order to balance, in the public opinion, by some patriotic declaration, the influence already gained by the deputies, from the position in which they had placed themselves—that of 'Defenders of the Charter.' But all the efforts of the prince were unavailing. The great number of his friends, such as Pasquier and Mol , hesitating to declare their opinions thus openly, in dread of the return of Charles X., declined taking a part in the protest of the deputies. M. de Talleyrand was pained to the quick by this want of decision, and foretold, with an accuracy which has since become manifest, all the bad consequences which would fall upon the Chamber of Peers, from having remained passive during this eventful crisis.

"By early dawn on the 30th, the people were, however, masters of Paris—of all the military posts—of all the barricades of the Tuileries—of the Louvre, and of the hotels of the ministers. The royalist troops had withdrawn, and were encamped round St. Cloud, where still lingered, in faint hope, in inert expectation, Charles X. and his court.

"Suddenly a report arose, and spread like wildfire through Paris! The old king, alarmed at the consequences of a civil war, had decided on immediate flight! M. de Talleyrand, at first, would give no credence to the rumours. He could not believe it possible that the king, being still surrounded by 12,000 devoted troops, would so soon abandon the chances of the game, and,

before he declared himself, he sent to St. Cloud to ascertain the truth of the statement. The return of the messenger staggered us all. He brought word that Charles had fled from St. Cloud, and was proceeding with all expedition to Rambouillet. At that moment, M. de Talleyrand's doubts were at an end; he decided at once upon the course he would pursue: and, in this circumstance, as in so many others wherein he has been accused of changing his politics to suit the hour, he might have answered as he had once done before, 'It is not I who desert the king—it is the king who deserts us!'

“Now came the time when the high intelligence and marvellous sagacity of the prince were brought into action, and, I hesitate not to repeat, saved the country. M. de Talleyrand dispatched to Neuilly, with all possible speed, a little billet written with his own hand. The bearer was a person of high courage and great integrity, and was charged, should he fall into danger, or be arrested at the barrier, to destroy the billet. He could not in honour read its contents, but saw that there were but few words traced upon the paper. They were addressed to the king's sister, Madame Adelaide. This messenger was commissioned to place the billet himself in the hands of the princess, and to tell her that the Prince de Talleyrand conjured her to warn the Duke of Orleans that not a moment was to be lost—that the Duke might reckon upon his aid, and that he must appear immediately—that he must come at once to Paris, to place himself at the head of the movement, or all would be lost without recal. Above all, he was only to take the title of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, which Charles had conferred upon him before leaving St. Cloud:—he implored him not to manifest any other intention. In this advice the old diplomatist was reserving for himself a back door to creep out at in case Charles should march on Paris.

“Madame Adelaide received the message with ill-dissembled joy. With woman's *astute*, however, she declined giving an answer in writing, as there were no

writing implements in the room, and she dared not ask the servants for them; being aware that the whole house was filled with spies, she knew not whom to trust at such a moment. She even took the precaution of returning the paper received from the prince, fearing either to retain or destroy it, lest its traces might be discovered. The messenger then took back this verbal message: 'That her brother would be most grateful for the assistance which Prince Talleyrand thus offered—that he was, for the moment *absent from Neuilly*—but that she would immediately have the prince's message conveyed to him, and would herself use her most earnest endeavour to persuade him to go at once to Paris.' The Duke of Orleans was, before night, established in the Palais Royal, and, in a few hours after his arrival, the walls of the capital were covered with placards and proclamations, signed LOUIS PHILIPPE, LIEUTENANT-GENERAL OF THE KINGDOM.

"Still, there remained an immense distance to over-leap before the crown could be grasped by the lieutenant-general. On the one hand, the republican party were howling with rage, to find the republic vanishing still further from their embrace—that dear-beloved republic, for whose sake they had rushed so blindly on the chances of a revolution. On the other side, the great mass of the citizens remained calm, and indifferent to the rise of another Bourbon. As to the party calling itself Carlist at the present day, it must have been very small indeed, for, in the hour of danger, it was invisible! The Orleans party, meanwhile, comprised all the leading members of the Opposition in both Chambers. At the head of this party was M. de Talleyrand, who, without exactly declaring himself in favour of the new dynasty, already directed all its movements, by the advice which he found means to transmit through a person in his confidence; for the barricades, by which the streets were still rendered impassable, prevented him from going in person to the Palais Royal.

"Nevertheless, M. de Talleyrand beheld with uneasiness the republicans beginning to profit by the kind of

interregnum which followed the flight of Charles X. This party, with the perseverance which still characterises it, were every hour gaining ground. Already the populace, which, during the three days had shown itself so magnanimous, so disinterested and generous, was beginning almost to murmur at its victory, and to lend a greedy ear to the furious declamations of the jacobins of 1830. A little longer hesitation, and the re-establishment of royalty would have become a thing impossible without another direful struggle, in which it is not quite clear that the Orleans party would have been victorious. Already were the piazzas and the gardens of the Palais Royal echoing with inflammatory appeals to the sovereign people, to stand forth while yet it was time, and to take into its own hands the government of what were virtually and morally its own interests. The approaches to the Chamber of Deputies, where the famous declaration of the 7th of August was concocting, were crowded with fierce and savage-looking men, calling with bloodthirsty cries for the establishment of the Republic, and vociferating horrible menaces against those deputies who would dare to set up another throne; above all, to seat upon it another Bourbon. A crisis was imminent. The government which was sitting at the Palais Royal had the utmost difficulty in restraining the people, by dint of intoxicating its self-love and vanity with the praises bestowed with liberal hand each morning in the journals. The people were beginning to discover, meanwhile, that the victory which they had gained, and for which they were so lauded, gave them neither bread for their starving families, nor work whereby to earn it; and they who, after having broken the sceptre of royalty, thought to be freed from all control, could not support, without shuddering, the restraint which a government, unsanctioned by the popular voice, sought to impose upon them.

“Dreadful rumours of revolt and massacre were circulated on all sides, and the family of the Duke of Orleans were not without alarm for the very life of its chief. The moment, then, was come at last—the mo-

ment to decide. Charles X. was taking, without resistance, the road to a new exile. From that quarter, then, all danger ceased. The deputies, now gathered together in sufficient number to deliberate, had come to offer the crown to the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. M. de Talleyrand was consulted at this crisis, and he it was who caused the faint resistance of Louis Philippe to cease, and induced him to place upon his brow the crown offered by the people, and he it was whose opinion decided the king to go at once to the Hôtel de Ville, there to receive publicly the sceptre of France, and to swear allegiance to the Charter. This truth may be relied on; and, moreover, M. de Talleyrand, in order to give to the new power the sanction of his old experience, appeared at the public reception of the Palais Royal for the first time since the revolution.

“Such was the part played by M. de Talleyrand in the revolution of 1830. Immense it was, if judged by its results, but neither studied beforehand nor rehearsed, as it has been so often unjustly asserted since that day. This part, indeed, was so entirely *impromptu*, that many persons of the intimate circle of the prince know that, more than once, M. de Talleyrand has let fall a regret that Charles, in his blind folly, should have destroyed in three days the whole fabric of the Restoration, which had been looked upon by all Europe as the masterpiece of Talleyrand’s diplomatic works. The weakness of seigneurial pride, too, the only one which I think he ever possessed, will sometimes cause him to sigh over the wreck of that principle of legitimacy which he had been at so much pains to re-establish in favour of the Bourbons, a principle which he still considers necessary to the repose of the country, perhaps compromised for many generations by the events of the three glorious days. The lesson which such regrets imply, conveys, to the thinking mind, its own moral.”

CHAPTER III.

SEIZURE AND CONFINEMENT OF THE SPANISH PRINCES
AT VALENCAY.

WHILE my friend had been thus discoursing of kings and revolutions, we had, after crossing a part of the park, turned in the court-yard, where stood the stables. I knew that the prince cared but little for his stud; I was surprised, therefore, when C. pulled the cord of the huge bell which hung at the entrance. At the sound, the groom, who was standing in the court, evidently knowing for what purpose he was summoned, flung back the wide doors of an outhouse near the gate.

"It is fit," said C., laughing, "that, as our discourse is all of chance and change, of fallen kings and falling governments, we should now behold the very type of these: although, fallen and faded as it is, it may be regarded as the great lion of Valençay."

Saying this, he stepped into the building, and I followed, and beheld, not as I had imagined, some fine high-mettled racer, the gift of this or that sovereign, presented in gratitude for the services of the diplomat, but a sight far more interesting—a sight which carried me back to the days of Philip V. and Cardinal Olivarez.

It was the carriage which had conveyed the Spanish princes across the frontier to Valençay, in 1808, and which they had left behind them under peculiar circumstances. The vehicle is of most antique and extraordinary construction. It must, indeed, be coeval with the Spanish monarchy; a huge, uncouth piece of Spanish workmanship, like nothing on earth but the Lord Mayor's state barge, or the car of Juggernaut. The panels are emblazoned in gold and silver, with the arms of all the royalties of Spain, and all the quarterings thereof besides. When new, and on a sunny day, these panels must have blinded the beholder. The roof is adorned in the quaint old style, with massive cornices and rich carvings. The hangings within and without were of crimson silk damask, and even the very wheels, although rude and ponderous, were curiously wrought and richly gilt.

"The circumstances of the huge machine having remained at Valençay are curious and amusing," said C. "When the morning arrived which was to send Ferdinand and his brother forth from their place of exile, to resume the crown and royalty in their own land, the huge carriage which had brought them to Valençay was drawn from its *remise*, and laden with the moveables which had been collected during their long captivity. There are a few persons living now at the château, who well remember the morning of the departure, and they will tell you all the ludicrous circumstances connected therewith, some of which would form valuable acquisitions to collectors of 'whims and oddities.'

"The day was fine: not a cloud obscured the horizon; all nature was gay and smiling. The old coach, roused from its long repose, and furbished up with new hangings and velvet cushions, had been dragged round to the *perron* to be loaded. This task being accomplished, the princes and their suite had squeezed themselves into the interior; the little pages stood upon the steps, and hung by the door, after a fashion which may still be seen in ancient prints; and, as for the valets and footmen, they clustered on behind, pell-mell, clinging to each other as

best they could. Some say this ponderous machine contained at that moment no fewer than seventeen persons. In Spain, it had always been set in motion by eight stout mules, but upon this occasion six brisk and capering post-horses were attached to it, with good stout ropes, too, for it was evident that it would require a strong pull to get it under weigh.

"The beautiful princess, the fair hostess, with her whole court, was standing on the *perron*, in picturesque and wailing grief. There were clouds on many a youthful brow, and the tears fell like rain from many a bright eye, for the princes had been beloved during their long and weary captivity, and in return they had felt a depth of gratitude towards the soft beguilers of their weary hours. Some there are who say that time hung not so heavy on their hands, as it might have done had they remained amid the dull and heavy splendours of the Escorial. It is certain that, upon this occasion, when they should have been joyous, they displayed faces of such weeping melancholy at either window of the vehicle, that you would have thought them going forth into exile still more dreary, instead of being about to resume their glorious birthright. They sobbed forth faint farewells, which were echoed back by the weeping beauties on the *perron*, until the uncle, old Don Antonio, in this case more impatient than his youthful nephews, urged the postillions to their greatest speed, with promise of princely reward.

"At length the cry of '*En route!*' burst from the guide; whips were cracked with energy tremendous, and handkerchiefs waved in graceful agitation. A louder sob burst from the ladies on the *perron*—a cry of absolute despair echoed from the carriage—the horses pulled—the postillions shouted—they even let fly sundry choice oaths which are ever ready at hand—the old coach groaned and creaked—that was all—the spurs were dug into the flinching sides of the poor animals—the old coach swayed to and fro, and swung with a rumbling sound—but it moved not! In vain did both man and beast toil and pull at the cords—they all broke

one after another, and not an inch of ground was gained.

"I have heard it said that no scene of the broadest farce could surpass in ludicrous effect that which took place, when it was discovered that it would be impossible, by any human means, to drag the machine even so far as the gate of the courtyard. The royal party were compelled to alight forthwith. All the baggage had to be unpacked, and they left Valençay in a much more humble conveyance,—a good, modern travelling carriage, belonging to the prince. I have often wondered if Don Carlos, when fighting in his Biscayan mountains, ever remembered that moment, and if so, whether with a smile or with a sigh."

I looked at the carriage with great interest, for there it still remains, just as it was rolled back to its old station under the *remise*. Through all the changes of the country from which it had rumbled over the frontier, laden with its royal freight, has it stood silently falling to decay—the gay emblazoned panels blistering and fading in the damp, and the splendid hangings all moth-eaten and falling to tatters—a curious memento, and one which even in our own day may find its way to some museum. It certainly would not disgrace any collection of "*pièces curieuses*," however rare and valuable.

C. told me that, "not being at Valençay at the period of the arrival of the Spanish princes, he could not bear witness to the effect which the sudden seizure of their persons, the breach of faith of Napoleon, and the strict captivity in which they were held, had produced in the country. He had, however, seen much of them during the time of their stay, and gave me some curious anecdotes concerning them. Ferdinand, and his brother, Don Carlos, were both young, almost mere lads, at the time, and at first, as it may well be supposed, they were overcome by grief and rage at being thus torn from their country by fraud and violence; but, after some little while, they grew reconciled to their fate, and even, with true youthful volatility, preferred it to the awful state and grandeur of the Spanish court, which, in these days, still maintains

the same absurd etiquette that had for ages rendered it the terror of foreign ambassadors, and gained for it the nickname of the "grave of the gay."

"It is an error," he added, "to suppose that the smiles and fascinations of the princess de Benevent herself had any share in this sudden change of sentiment, for she was already past the age to captivate the fancy of her youthful guests; but there were some among her fair maids of honour for whom the young princes would gladly have sworn never to return to Spain, not even to rule over it in splendour.

"They were a curious collection assembled at Valencay. First and foremost came the two princes, Don Ferdinand, Prince of the Asturias, and Don Carlos, his younger brother. Of these, more anon. Then came old Don Antonio, brother to the reigning King of Spain, and uncle of the two boys, guardian likewise of their welfare and their morals. The latter was a true Spaniard of the *vieille roche*; such a character as may be found in the old Spanish novels; ignorant and haughty as the hidalgo of Columbus's day, yet *bonhomme* withal, credulous and unsuspecting as a child.

"At the same time with the Spanish princes and their suite, arrived at the château the commandant Henri, delegate and spy of the police, commissioned to keep close watch over the youthful heroes, and not to suffer them to leave his sight either night or day. I really think that the presence of this man was the only source of uneasiness or annoyance that the royal personages experienced during their stay. He was a hard and vulgar individual, whose life had been passed amid scenes of strife and treason, and he fulfilled the duties allotted to him with a pertinacity and minuteness which embittered the lives of those entrusted to his charge. Of course, from his position about the persons of the princes, he became at once the object of their hatred and contempt, and if in wantonness of power he often inflicted useless vexation, they in the wantonness of youth managed to revenge themselves with great ingenuity. Some of the scenes to which this state of things gave

rise were most amusing. One of the greatest delights enjoyed by Don Ferdinand was, at the hour of prayer, night and morning, to compel the attendance of the commander, to whom, from his republican and anti-religious principles, the idea of bending to a Supreme Being was odious, and who would growl forth his republican oaths in cadence with the chant of the officiating priest. He had been wounded, too, in his youth, and in his age was stiff-jointed besides, so that to kneel was absolute agony.

“Don Ferdinand would provide amusement for the whole company, by assisting him with mock condescension to drop upon his knees, and would convulse them with laughter at the sly shoves and friendly pinches which this operation would give him the opportunity of bestowing. In vain the commander would seek to excuse himself from attending at this precise hour. No excuse would be taken; his royal charges would rather wait any length of time than dispense with his company. The annoyance grew so great for the poor commander, that all his days were embittered by the torture of that single hour, and the poor tormented princes were amply revenged by this gentle and gentlemanlike chastisement.

“Don Antonio, the dear good old soul, was at first much admired and venerated by every one around him, for the assiduity with which he visited the library of the château. Many and long, indeed, were the hours he spent there, much to the edification of those who, beholding the utter ignorance in which the princes had been brought up, began to hope that so much study and meditation on the part of the tutor would in good time turn to profit and improvement for his pupils. But, alas! soon were the fond believers undeceived. The good old man suddenly ceased his visits to the library; and on being questioned by the Princess de Benevent as to this sudden alteration in his mode of passing his time, he replied, with composure, ‘Thank God, my work is over, and I can smoke my cigaretto in the shade beneath the piazza, without the fear that the morals of my pupils may be corrupted by those naughty books.’

“ ‘Nay,’ replied the princess, ‘if your Excellency had but pointed out which were those you thought objectionable, I would have had them removed; my servants should have done it long ago, and saved you all this trouble.’

“ ‘Oh, do not mention trouble,’ replied the Don, with calm politeness; ‘besides, removing the books would have spoilt your library. It was only the vile Latin authors whom I dreaded; but fortunately, neither Don Ferdinand nor his brother can read them, and the engravings were soon removed by my care and trouble. I promise you, madame, not one remains, in all those books the Prince de Benevent pointed out to me as being those most studied by the youth of this country.’

“ Judge of the dismay of the princess on hearing these words. Instant search was made among the volumes of which he spoke, some of the most rare and valuable editions in the whole collection. It was too true. The pious Don, in terror for the morals of his pupils, had taken the pains to tear out the beautiful engravings, which in many cases formed the chief value of the books. Every one the least objectionable was gone. The beautiful Ovid, the magnificent Strasburg Bible, and many others of equal value, were stripped, and may be seen to this day, as positive proofs of the *ignorance crasse* in which the royal family of Spain were at that time reared.

“ The ignorance of Don Ferdinand would have been remarkable, even in a convent of Spanish friars. He *could* read, indeed, but made it his boast that he never did so, having a ‘valet in his service who understood all the mysteries of science.’ This was *verbatim* his own expression. He was of quiet and taciturn habits, however, and loved to spend his time in cutting out with scissors divers little devices, with which he enclosed the *bon-bons* he loved to present to the ladies of the princess’s court. He was fond, too, of searching in books: but it was soon discovered that Don Antonio’s alarm was but too well founded; the royal youth loved books for the sake of the ‘pretty pictures’ they contained, and nothing more.

“ The younger brother, Don Carlos, was far less gentle

in his manner, and less favoured in person. His great passion was the chase, in which the commander loved to indulge him, as he himself partook of the same taste.

"But if," said my friend, "you would like to know more of their deeds and doings, I will give you a sketch of all the circumstances which took place, from the time of their *enlèvement* at Bayonne, to their return to Madrid. It was given me by a gentleman of their suite. It may amuse you, and you may read it at your leisure."

Just at the moment my friend uttered this promise, the breakfast-bell sounded a joyous peal across the park, and we hastened to obey its summons. C. being engaged during the morning, gave me the paper he had promised, to amuse my *ennui*, and, in the hope that its contents may afford to others the same delight they occasioned me, I shall give them to the reader.

The little manuscript which my friend placed in my hand, had been found in the château after the departure of the young princes of Spain from Valençay. It was written in a fair hand, and bore the following title :

"The Secret History of the Intrigues, which ended in the Seizure and Imprisonment of Ferdinand VII. and his Brothers at Valençay."

The *cahier* was found in the library, and as there was but ONE person of the whole suite who ever went thither, it is well known by whom it was written—a gentleman of truth and honour, at the very moment I am now writing this holding a high situation about the person of the Queen of Spain, Isabella. The manuscript began as follows :

"In the month of March, 1807, the Prince of Asturias, who was in active and secret correspondence with Don Juan d'Escoiquiz, Archdeacon and Canon of Toledo, his former preceptor, sent to him at Toledo, where he then resided, a person in his confidence, named Jose Marrique. The prince forwarded by this person a letter to be delivered into M. d'Escoiquiz's own hand, wherein he spoke

of his suspicions concerning the ambitious views of the Prince of the Peace, who, in consequence of obtaining daily, either from the king or queen, some new dignity or favour, became more and more powerful, particularly in possessing, as he did, the command of the army, the navy, and the militia. Already the rumour had arisen that Charles IV., whose health was declining fast, had appointed him Regent of the Kingdom. Once regent, the death of the king would open a new career to his ambition. The character of the Prince of the Peace, and his proximity to the throne, tended to excite alarm in the friends of the royal family.

“ M. d’Escoiquiz, in dismay at the contents of the Prince’s letter, flattered himself that it would be easy to undeceive the king and queen with regard to the real character of the Prince of the Peace. He immediately penned a letter, which was to be delivered by the Prince of Asturias into the hands of the queen, in which he displayed, with great eloquence, all the danger in which the royal family stood by the blind confidence the king reposed in the Prince of the Peace. This letter, full of reason and of truth, so much alarmed the Prince of Asturias, that he could never find courage to present it to his mother, and he merely copied it in his own hand. Somewhat ashamed of his own want of resolution, he wrote to M. d’Escoiquiz, that he judged it impossible ever to enlighten the queen, and that he thought it would be easier to persuade the king to reason, if he could get an opportunity of speaking with him *tête-à-tête*.

“ The worthy Canon of Toledo immediately set about inditing another letter, which he endeavoured to adapt to the weak understanding of the king, and sent it to the prince, who waited in vain for an opportunity of giving it in private to his father. This document was copied, like the former one, by the prince himself, and likewise locked up in his desk, where they were both found on the seizure of his papers some time afterwards.

“ The Prince of the Peace, who suspected that the reserve and taciturn habits of the Prince of Asturias served to conceal hostile intentions towards himself, sought every

means of undermining the fidelity of the young prince's household, and made a proposition through the queen to marry him to Donna Maria Theresa, his sister-in-law, second daughter of the Infant Don Luiz. This princess was remarkable for her great beauty and ambition, and had already exhibited an inclination for gallantry. The prince, who knew but little of her beyond her personal attractions, had already given his consent to this union, when suddenly the ambition of the Prince of the Peace had become more insatiable than ever, and the marriage was broken off.

“ M. d'Escoiquiz, on perceiving that every means of gaining access to the king and queen had failed, and that the marriage with Donna Maria had failed also, began to imagine that the only hope of support for the Prince of Asturias would lie in his marriage with a princess of the family of Bonaparte. M. d'Escoiquiz grew, in fact, quite enraptured with the scheme which he himself had planned; and, wishing to preside over its execution, he left his quiet retreat at Toledo, and came to reside at Madrid. There he became acquainted with Count Orquez, a gentleman much attached to the Prince of Asturias, and communicated to him his alarms and his future plans. In one of their secret conversations, M. de Orquez informed him that Don Diego Godoï, the father of the Prince of the Peace, was distributing money among the garrison of Madrid, and had thus corrupted a great number of the officers. A colonel of dragoons, Don Joaquin Jauregui, gave them intelligence of all that transpired, and informed them, that to every officer of distinction Godoï had said, ‘ You see the miserable state into which the kingdom has fallen—the Bourbon dynasty is degenerated—the king cannot live much longer—the prince is a weak, capricious fool. Some change is necessary—we reckon on your aid.’ Throughout the whole of Madrid, the secret agents of Godoï were at work night and day. The Abbé Stata, librarian of St. Isidore, had been imprudent enough to spread inflammatory writings, the object of which was to prove to the Spanish nation, that in the existing crisis, the only hope of salvation lay

in an entire confidence in the judgment and experience of the Prince of the Peace.

“In this state of affairs, M. d’Escoiquiz was aware that not a moment was to be lost, and that all true friends of the throne must at once league together for its defence. His first step was to obtain from the Prince of Asturias a kind of letter of credit, which authorized him to speak confidentially with the Duke del’ Infantado, a young man of exalted birth, of great integrity, and chivalrous courage, holding a high place in public esteem. Armed with this letter, written in the prince’s own hand, he appointed a meeting with the duke, and together they swore fidelity to the throne, vowing respect even to the absurd blindness of the king, and merely concerting the measures to be taken in the house, when the king, whose health was declining daily, should breathe his last, at which moment it would be the easiest thing in the world for the Prince of the Peace to conceal the death of the sovereign as long as it should please him so to do. The hatred and suspicion which he had so craftily engendered in the bosom of the queen against her son, had compelled her to fill the palace with troops, all devoted to herself and to Godoï. It was his design when, by the rules of etiquette established at the Spanish court, the exact moment arrived for the heir to the throne to appear at the bedside of the dying king, to have the young prince arrested, and to make him sign by force the necessary decree, which would place the whole power in the hands of the favourite. The Duke del’ Infantado and M. d’Escoiquiz judged then, that the only means to guard against this outrage, would be to provide themselves with a decree, signed and sealed by the new king, by which the whole power, civil and military, would be placed in the hands of the Duke del’ Infantado, placing also beneath his command the Prince of the Peace himself.

“Empowered by this decree, the Duke del’ Infantado, on the first signification of the approaching death of the king, was to declare his power, take possession of all the military forces, and to appear in the city and in the

royal palaces, habited in the costume of Generalissimo of the Kingdom, with full intentions to arrest immediately the Prince of the Peace, if the conduct of the latter gave any cause for umbrage. M. d'Escoïquiz drew up this decree, and had it conveyed to the prince, with the necessary instructions, begging him to copy it with his own hand, and to fix his own seal upon the paper. The prince complied with the whole of those directions, and the letter was placed at once in the hands of the Duke del' Infantado, who was to preserve it carefully until the moment arrived when it would be required. The act was complete, signed, according to Spanish usage, '*Yo el Re,*' and a vacant space left for the date, which was to be filled up by the Duke del' Infantado at the moment of the King's death.

"About the middle of the month of June, M. d'Escoïquiz received another letter from the Prince of Asturias: in it was announced that, through the medium of Don Juan Emanuel de Villena, his first equerry, he had received an important billet, signed by Don Pedro Giraldo, tutor to the Infant Don Francisco, and that this billet was written by an individual belonging to the French Legation. It contained the announcement of a most important and secret communication, which it was the wish of the French ambassador, M. de Beaucharnais, to make to the prince. M. d'Escoïquiz, whom the latter had consulted with regard to the line of conduct which he ought to adopt, was of opinion that the prince's reply should be peremptory — that 'he meddled not with public affairs, nor held interviews with public men.' Meanwhile, he undertook to discover if the message really came from the French ambassador, or was merely a trap laid by Godoi to condemn the young prince. This tried and valued friend, never at a loss, had soon invented a pretext to call upon the ambassador, to whom he was unknown. He requested permission to present to M. l'Ambassadeur the first volume of an epic poem, to be entitled, '*The Conquest of Mexico.*'

"The ambassador, without appearing surprised at the sudden literary reputation usurped by M. d'Escoï-

quiz, answered with courtesy that he would receive with pleasure the book and its author. After a few observations relating to 'the Conquest of Mexico,' some few remarks on the state of affairs bringing each of them nearer to the object they both had in view, M. d'Escoiquiz frankly questioned the ambassador on the subject of the billet which had been delivered to the Prince of Asturias, and begged him, as a point of honour, to tell him the truth concerning it.

"The ambassador feigned a certain embarrassment, denied being the author of the billet, yet wished it to be understood that in reality he was; said that a message from an ambassador to the heir-apparent would scarcely have been admissible, but declared he felt much esteem for his royal highness, and that he would be greatly pleased by the permission to pay his court, *en particulier*, to the young prince. By all this specious reasoning M. d'Escoiquiz judged of the truth, and at once told him, without further disguise, that the prince firmly believed that the message came from him.

"Then why have you not brought me a *written* message in return?" said M. de Beauharnais, involuntarily betraying himself; whereupon M. d'Escoiquiz, laughing, replied, 'That *written messages could be denied*, therefore a preconcerted signal would, in his opinion, be more efficacious;' and, before the conclusion of the interview, it was agreed that, as the court was in a few days to return to Madrid, the ambassador would present himself, as usual, at the head of the *corps diplomatique* at the reception of his royal highness, and that the prince would ask him 'if he had ever been at Naples?' and that, on turning as he would leave him, to pass to another ambassador, he would take his handkerchief from his pocket and wave it as he passed.

"On the 1st of July the ambassadors were received by his royal highness, who supported M. d'Escoiquiz by giving the preconcerted signal. Two days after this, M. d'Escoiquiz had another interview with M. de Beauharnais, who bade him rely on the sentiments of affection which Napoleon had ever felt towards the Prince

of Asturias, and his readiness to maintain his cause against the Prince of the Peace. It was then that M. d'Escoïquiz thought it proper to bring forward the question concerning the marriage, and even went so far as to leave to Napoleon the choice of the princess of his own family whom he would prefer to place upon the throne of Spain. The utmost secrecy was sworn to on both sides, M. de Beauharnais promising to write immediately to Paris, in order that proper measures might be taken with regard to the king, so as to prevent any imputation of intrigue being laid to the charge of his son.

"In consequence of the surveillance which was exercised by Godoï over every movement of the French ambassador, it was agreed that M. de Beauharnais and M. d'Escoïquiz were to meet for the first interview in a secluded spot of the gardens of the Retiro. It was about twenty days afterwards that M. d'Escoïquiz received an intimation that he would be expected during the hour of siesta, when they would have little fear of surprise, at the place which had been appointed. Here M. d'Escoïquiz learnt, with the greatest astonishment, that the answer which the ambassador had received from Napoleon was perfectly puerile and insignificant, never even alluding to the marriage: and M. de Beauharnais, attributing this silence to the absence of any *written* communication on the part of the young prince, advised M. d'Escoïquiz to persuade him to write directly to Napoleon. (Was this a snare?) It is certain that M. de Beauharnais *must* have received some positive instructions, which he did not choose to reveal until the prince had further committed himself, and he suffered M. d'Escoïquiz to return to Toledo in disgust.

"It was on the 30th September, 1807, that M. d'Escoïquiz received a letter from the ambassador, in which were quoted, as an extract from a private communication of Napoleon's, the following words, each underlined: '*I beg not, neither do I sell—I act not without security. Have you received any official communication touching this affair?*' The forms of political quackery

employed in this letter induced M. d'Escoiquiz once more to return to Madrid; again did he meet the ambassador at the Retiro; again did M. de Beauharnais endeavour to persuade M. d'Escoiquiz to prevail upon the prince to write directly to Napoleon; and the good canon, having the welfare of the prince at heart, yielded at last, and promised that such a letter should be written.

“Now, the Prince of the Peace was all this time perfectly aware of everything that was passing in the house of the ambassador, through the medium of the spies with whom the latter was surrounded, and he caused the king immediately to write, himself, to Napoleon, which epistle was instantly despatched to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, the Prince de Masserano, with orders to convey it, the very moment of its arrival, to the emperor, in whatever place he might chance to be. It was natural enough that, with the dilatory character of the Prince of Asturias, his father's letter should arrive long before his own. It reached the emperor at Fontainebleau, and excited much astonishment and indignation. It was full of bitter reproach against Napoleon for having encouraged a secret correspondence with the young heir to the Spanish throne, telling him beforehand of the despatch he was about to receive from the prince, *and of all that the letter would contain.*

“That letter was full of protestations of devotion to Napoleon, and of admiration of his brilliant qualities, of the before-mentioned proposal of marriage, and of supplications to the emperor to aid in rescuing the country from the hands of the Prince of the Peace. It was upon the strength of this letter that the Prince of the Peace, gained over by Napoleon, persuaded the old king to allow of the entry of French troops, ostensibly to compel Portugal to separate her cause from that of England—it being understood that it was merely as a passage to that country that these troops were allowed to cross the line.

“On the 27th of October, at ten o'clock at night, the Prince of Asturias was arrested in the Palace of the

Escorial, under the accusation of having conspired to rob his father of the throne, and of having sought to assassinate him. The act of arrest went on to say, that these particulars had come to the knowledge of the king *through an unknown channel*, and that he would be tried for the crime of high treason. M. d'Escoïquiz and the Duke del' Infantado were arraigned as accomplices. They were confined in the dungeons of the Escorial, deprived of all communication with each other, or with the world without, and two sentinels were stationed at the door of each cell.

“During the process of the prince, the number of French troops had increased to more than double. It was observed that they had taken up positions entirely contrary to the direction they had professed to follow, and that they were each day drawing nearer to Madrid, and the people, in every country more clear-sighted than its rulers, began to feel alarm at the intrusion. It was necessary to give some diplomatic explanations concerning these singular marches, but these were so ill received, that the Prince of the Peace was compelled to order back the Spanish regiments already on their road to Portugal. The ambassador feigned total ignorance, and, after the lapse of a few days, received instructions to say that, by commanding the retrograde movement, the Prince of the Peace must be prepared to allow of an increase of French forces. In the fear of a counter order, these latter troops, by forced marches, soon took possession of the whole frontier of Catalonia, Navarre, and Guipuscoa. The court wishing to appear free from anxiety, negotiations went on as usual between the two governments. Meanwhile, the country was invaded, and the Prince of the Peace began to lose somewhat of his overweening confidence in the disinterested friendship of Napoleon, but, like all weak-minded persons, thought that everything would be saved by gaining time. He accordingly proposed a journey into Andalusia on the 13th of March, and that very same night he gave orders for departure; but it was impossible to keep the preparations so secret as to escape the

observation of some of the hangers-on who always throng about royal palaces. The orders all along the road for relays of horses, the departure of the luggage, the sudden disappearance of Madame Yudo, with her children, all these circumstances united had produced an uneasiness among the people, and roused the feeling of hatred and indignation towards the Prince of the Peace, which had slumbered, but had never been extinguished, and it was declared that he was counselling the king to desert Madrid.

“ In these popular movements, it needs but a spark to light the brand, and in less time than could be conceived possible, a crowd had assembled before Godoï's residence, with loud and furious cries demanding justice on the oppressor of the people. Godoï escaped, thanks to his foresight in preparing for a day of reckoning. He had planned and accomplished a secret retreat beneath the roof of his palace, where he remained concealed while the work of pillage and devastation was going on around him. It was not till the 19th that he was discovered by a sentinel, who could not be bribed to facilitate his flight. He was secured, and conveyed through the streets in a piteous plight.

“ The king, justly deeming that the Prince of Asturias would have greater influence with the crowd than himself, was reduced to implore his son to intercede in favour of the unfortunate minister. This the prince, with true Christian feeling, in spite of all cause of grievance which he himself had to complain of, immediately consented to do; and, suddenly appearing on the balcony of the palace, he promised the assembled multitude that, if they would disperse, the Prince of the Peace should be tried and judged according to the law. This address had the desired effect; the crowd retired, and Godoï was taken prisoner to the barracks of the *gardes du corps*, where, by one of those strange coincidences by which it would appear as if Providence sought to remind ambitious men of a day of retribution, he was locked up in the very chamber which he had occupied when a simple private soldier in that identical corps.

“ It was after this event that the Prince of Asturias was received into favour, and, with him, the friends who had been so devoted to his cause. M. d’Escoïquiz was appointed to superintend all the negotiations with the French ambassador, as it was thought in council that M. de Beauharnais, after what had taken place, would find himself more at ease with M. d’Escoïquiz than with any other of its members.”

It was immediately after these events that Charles IV., by his own spontaneous act, abdicated the throne in favour of his son, who took his father’s place as Ferdinand VII. All the circumstances which followed are fully detailed in the work of M. de Pradt, and need not be repeated here. The details of the manuscript tally in every respect with those given by that author, and I shall therefore content myself with giving to the reader the gossiping portion of the narrative—the hitherto *unpublished* history of one of the most striking and audacious *coups-de-main* of modern history.

“ From this hour was that *coup-de-main* evidently planned and meditated, and one scarcely knows which to admire most—the fond and simple security of the Spaniards, or the boldness and contempt of all social respect which characterized the proceedings of the French. The ambassador announced at length the arrival of the Emperor Napoleon at Bordeaux, and was pleased to renew the protestations of friendship on the part of his master, with which he had already beguiled the faith and credulity of the poor young Prince of Asturias. It was not, however, until the 8th of April that King Ferdinand decided on despatching his young brother, Don Carlos, to meet the emperor, with instructions to proceed even to Paris, should he fail to meet him on the road. Don Carlos was the bearer of a letter from Ferdinand to Napoleon, in which, after speaking of the strict alliance which it was the interest of both countries to maintain, and having again urged the subject of his marriage with one of the emperor’s nieces, he announced his intention of going forward to meet his imperial majesty, as soon as he should have approached the frontiers of Spain.

“ Don Carlos took his departure on the 9th of April. The news of the departure of the emperor from Paris reached Madrid on the 11th. Ferdinand, meanwhile, worn out with the persecutions of the Grand-duke of Berg and General Savary, quitted Madrid, for Burgos, on the 14th. His council advised him to this measure; perceiving that he had not the means either of attack or defence, it was thought to be the wisest plan to throw himself into the arms of Napoleon.

“ It was now observed that not a single negotiation had taken place with the new king, and that he had not been formally acknowledged by Napoleon, who had never taken the trouble to answer any of his letters, and now, too late, it was beginning to be feared that the frequent conferences which had taken place between Charles IV., the queen, and the Grand-duke of Berg, through the medium of the Queen of Etruria, had for their only aim the replacing of Charles upon the throne, by causing him to protest against the act of abdication. This secret intrigue, of which M. de Monthion, adjutant-general, had been the messenger, and the Queen of Etruria the instrument, produced the act of the 21st of April, in which Charles IV. speaks thus :

“ ‘ I protest and declare that my decree of the 19th of March, by which I abdicated the throne in favour of my son, was extorted from me by force, and the desire of preventing great disorder in my kingdom, and the effusion of the blood of my well-beloved people, and ought therefore to be regarded as an act null and void.

“ ‘ YO EL REY.’

“ The natural consequence of this protest was, of course, the application to Napoleon for help against his son, thus pronounced a rebel and usurper. Ferdinand had authorized a junta, under the presidency of his uncle Don Antonio, to take charge of the government during his absence. He had with him a single squadron of the *gardes du corps*, and two companies of foot had

orders to await him at Burgos. He was three days upon the road, and found every post occupied by French troops, among which he could not discern a single Spanish soldier. At Burgos, he found Marshal Bessières, in command of 10,000 men. The marshal courteously offered the use of the relays which had been provided for Napoleon, for the conveyance of Ferdinand to Vittoria, which offer was accepted. Here the unfortunate prince found a corps composed of two hundred dragoons, and a *compagnie d'élite* of fifty gendarmes, commanded by Colonel Fleury.

"The prince remained three days at Vittoria, and lodged at the Hotel de Ville. Savary grew impatient at this long delay; his orders were to bring the prince on to Bayonne, *volens volens*. Every measure had been taken to carry him off on the 19th, if he had not listened to the last endeavour at persuasion on the 18th. But the king removed every difficulty, by announcing his intention of once more setting forward on his journey. At nine o'clock on the morning of the 19th, at the moment of his getting into the carriage, a popular instinct had drawn together a vast concourse of people at the door of the Hôtel de Ville; a universal cry of execration arose from the multitude as the young prince mounted the vehicle; the traces were cut, and the mules unharnessed. Ferdinand was compelled to harangue the populace, and succeeded in quieting them by assurances of his perfect safety; the furious cries which had been heard gave place to tears, and, soon afterwards, he was allowed to depart: but in consequence of the delay, did not arrive at Irun until eleven o'clock at night.

"Here the king and his brother were lodged at the house of M. d'Alozabal, outside the town, and they were guarded by a Spanish regiment. General Savary did not arrive at Irun until the 20th, at seven in the morning, owing to an accident which occurred to his carriage. Thus the king and his council were left for eight hours alone, without their French escort, guarded by Spanish troops, in the house of a Spaniard, situated on the seashore, where a number of boats were lying attached to

stakes planted at the bottom of the garden. General Savary, immediately on his arrival, rushed like a terrified culprit to the house where the king had alighted. Oh, joy!—he found him still sleeping quietly in his bed.

“At eight o’clock, the *cortège* set out for Bayonne, and in that place was accomplished one of the most extraordinary events which, perhaps, has ever taken place in the history of nations. At the moment when the king passed over the frontier, the carriage was surrounded by detachments of the imperial guard. Their numbers appeared rather extraordinary for a mere guard of honour. This reflection, vague enough on its first adoption, changed to a sinister foreboding, when, on passing beneath the triumphal arch which had been thrown across the road, they beheld the following words inscribed amidst the boughs of laurel with which it was decorated:—‘He who can make and destroy Kings at pleasure is himself more than a King.’

“Now were the princes of Spain beyond the jurisdiction of their own country, and in the power of Napoleon. Between Vivau and Bayonne, Ferdinand found the Infant Don Paulo, who, with three Spanish noblemen, had come to greet his unhappy brother. The king requested them to join him in his carriage, and then he learned, with the greatest surprise, that Napoleon himself had declared to them on the day before, at *ten in the morning*, that they might never expect to return to Madrid, and that one of his own brothers was about to occupy the throne of Spain. I have marked the hour at which this declaration had taken place, because it must have taken eighteen hours to get the news conveyed to Irun, and at Irun, as we have seen, there had been ample time and opportunity for the escape of the princes.

“Nothing was left but resignation to their fate; the carriage was drawing near to Bayonne; at half-past twelve o’clock, the princes arrived in the good old city, and, a few moments afterwards, the king received a visit from Napoleon in person. In this interview, doubtless by design, the conversation was insignificant, excepting

that it was observed that, in the style of Napoleon's address to the king, there existed an affectation of addressing him in the third person, using the pronoun *elle*, which might be applicable in the French language either to majesty or royalty.

"Ferdinand hastened to pay his respects to Napoleon, in grateful homage for this first visit, and the emperor invited him to dine at the Château de Maroc. The Dukes de San Carlos, de Medina Coeli, and del' Infantado, were also invited. The Prince de Neuchâtel was the only Frenchman present at this dinner.

"On the next day, Napoleon granted a private audience to M. d'Escoiquiz, and bade him comprehend that he was determined to alter the dynasty which had sat upon the throne of Spain; forgetting that he had a thousand times declared that his own existence was incompatible with the fact of any sovereign of the house of Bourbon being allowed to remain on any of the thrones of Europe. He alleged, in excuse of his proceedings, the proclamation of the Spanish government at the period of the battle of Jena, which proclamation, he said, had been regarded in France as a measure of war. He then added, in a loud, fierce voice, that it would be useless to seek to alter his determination, for that nothing on earth could make him change. He paused after the utterance of these terrible words, and then spoke, in a softened voice, of the misfortunes into which the young princes had fallen, and regretted for their sakes that he was compelled to take such harsh measures, wishing them to be assured that nothing but the necessity of perfecting his system could have induced him to behave thus hardly towards them. He even went so far as to offer to the young king, upon condition that he would renounce all pretensions to the Crown of Spain, the kingdom of Etruria, with one year's revenue, to be spent in forming a household, one of his nieces in marriage, and, in case he himself died without heirs, a right to share his property with his younger brothers.

"M. d'Escoiquiz, who was a brave and clever man, answered to all this disloyal cant as became a Spaniard

and a gentleman, without acrimony and without passion, stating that it was not in the power of the emperor to compensate the king for the loss of the crown of which he was depriving him, and appealing at great length to every feeling of honour and humanity in the emperor's bosom. Napoleon listened to all without betraying the slightest mark of impatience, but merely replied that he had been for a long time engaged in examining the question on every side; that his present determination was dictated by the *system* which he had in view, and which, although against the feelings of his heart, he must continue to persevere in. The canon then retired. The result of his visit was submitted to the other friends of Ferdinand. M. de Cevallos was *alone* of opinion that every proposition of Napoleon should be refused, and that all communication between the two sovereigns should be suspended; and he exacted, seeing the great responsibility which the council was incurring with the Spanish nation, that each member should certify his opinion in writing.

“Is it not strange that the courage of these men should have been roused just at the moment when they had need of nought but resignation? But so it was: their Spanish pride had taken umbrage at last, and the Duke del' Infantado was commissioned to announce to Napoleon the prince's intention of naming a plenipotentiary to negotiate in writing every subject which it might be the emperor's pleasure to have discussed. The proceeding of Napoleon on this occasion was highly characteristic of the man. He sent for M. d'Escoiquiz, and told him, in blunt and coarse language, that, if before eleven o'clock that night the councillors did not bring the formal renunciation of Ferdinand to the throne of Spain, and the formal demand of that of Etruria, he would treat with Charles IV., who was to arrive on the morrow. M. de Cevallos implored the young king not to accede to any proposition of Napoleon; but, the day after, M. d'Escoiquiz ventured to speak again concerning Tuscany, when Napoleon answered abruptly, ‘*Par Dieu, mon cher, il n'est plus temps!*’

“ On the 30th, at four in the afternoon, Charles IV. and the queen arrived at Bayonne. Napoleon had despatched one of his chamberlains to compliment them at Irun. In the same carriage with the king was the Princess d'Alcudia, daughter of the Prince of the Peace. The entry of the king and queen was most brilliant. The princes were allowed to go forward to meet them, and returned to Bayonne in their suite.

“ The arrival of Charles completely altered the face of things. He consented to all that was required of him. Napoleon sent a message, through M. d'Escoiquiz, to Ferdinand, to the effect that, as King Charles IV. had refused to adhere to his abdication, it was the duty of the Prince of Asturias to give in his renunciation at the instant. The young prince, through weakness, consented to this mark of respect to his father, although aware that in this proposition some sinister design of Napoleon must be concealed. The first act of authority on the part of Charles was to name the grand-duke of Berg lieutenant-general of the kingdom, thus excluding Don Antonio, who had been called to Bayonne by an order of Charles himself. Don Antonio had yielded without a murmur; and an aide-de-camp of the Grand-duke of Berg escorted him to Bayonne, where he arrived on the 25th. He had incurred some danger on the road, for the people had unharnessed the mules of his carriage at Tolosa, and thrown down cart-loads of rubbish on the bridge. Don Antonio had owed his safety entirely to the courage of the captain of cuirassiers who commanded his escort.

“ Soon after the arrival of Don Antonio, the Queen of Etruria joined the royal party, bringing with her the Infant Don Francisco. It was at this moment that the princes were greeted with the astounding information that they were immediately to depart as prisoners for Valençay, and here they arrived on the 18th of May.

“ Their entrance into the château will never be forgotten, for it left upon the mind of every beholder the most singular impression. The princes (all excepting Don Antonio) were young, and blooming with health and

innocence, while everything about them, the habiliments which they wore, the carriages which conveyed them, the liveries of their attendants, brought back the memory of past centuries. The very coach from which they alighted might have belonged to Philip V. This air of antiquity reminded the bystanders of their grandeur, and rendered their position still more interesting. They were the first Bourbons who had touched the soil of France, after so many years of troubles and disasters, and it was with tears that they were received. The Princess de Talleyrand and the ladies of her suite crowded round to greet them on their arrival, and by their attentions succeeded in diverting the grief which they expressed at this cruel and unjustifiable exile. It was the object of every inhabitant of the château to render this exile as easy to be borne as possible.

“On the very morrow of their arrival, the young princes were assured by all they saw, that Napoleon reigned not either in the château or in the park of Valençay. No one was permitted to appear before them without an order from themselves, and it was agreed that no one should approach them save in court costume. Such marks of honour and respect were pleasing to young men who had been brought up amid the ceremony and etiquette of the Esecorial. Every hour of the day was allotted to some pursuit. In the morning, mass at the chapel—then the *siesta*—then driving or riding in the park, and then again to prayer. In a few days, the young princes found themselves more at home than they had ever done in their father’s palace at Madrid. They had never been accustomed even to go out to take an airing without a ceremonious permission from the king: they had never been allowed even to walk together, it not being etiquette for more than one royal prince to be absent from the palace at a time. It is a singular fact that the amusements of the chase, riding on horseback, and dancing, had been strictly prohibited at the court of Spain. It was at Valençay that Ferdinand fired his first shot.

“The young princes were all delighted at the change

in their habits, and at the kindness with which they were surrounded. The *garde de chasse* who accompanied them through the park, had served the Prince de Condé; the riding-master who was employed to teach them to ride had been for years in the *grande écurie*, and had given instructions to Madame Elizabeth; so that they were constantly reminded of individuals of their own family. Boucher, the cook, was continually employed in concocting detestable Spanish ollas. The terrace before the château was converted for their amusement into a *salle de bal*, where they would sometimes join in those dances of their country which require no art to follow the movements or the step. Guitars were left in every corner of the garden; and the kind-hearted Dussek himself would devote his time and talent to the execution of simple Spanish airs, which they would love to hear, as being the only music they could understand.

“But all these amusements were only minor points of interest in the history of their lives. It was at the hour of prayer, when the bell of the chapel rang at sunset, that all the etiquette of Spanish form was most strictly adhered to. Every soul in the château, whether visitor, attendant, gaoler, or guard, was compelled to attend at the chapel: and it was really a touching sight to behold prisoners and gaolers, oppressors and oppressed, kneeling together before the same God, laying aside their bitterness and enmities before Him who was one day to judge them all.

“During this period of uncertainty, while his European allies were still dubious as to the manner in which his brother Joseph would be received as king of Spain, Napoleon was in a state of constant terror and alarm with regard to the prisoners of Valençay: he could not hear of the place, nor of the persons who inhabited it, without giving way to transports of rage, and to the utterance of injurious epithets concerning those whom he had already wronged and oppressed. One day, the young prince received a billet, couched in the following terms: ‘Prince Ferdinand, in writing to me, addresses

me as his cousin. Let him understand that such address is ridiculous, and let him henceforth simply call me "SIRE."

"From this time forward, the existence of the princes seemed to have been forgotten; and all that can be said of them during the five years that they spent at Valençay is, that they existed. The treaty which fixed their departure to Spain was negotiated at Valençay, and they left the place full of unspeakable gratitude for the kindness and princely generosity of its owner."

Just as I had finished the reading of this tale of wonder, C. entered the room. "What think you of this strange statement?" said he. "The history of your own country, all wild and furious as it is, cannot offer an example of such audacity as this." I was fain humbly to confess our inferiority in these matters. "But do you know," said I, "the opinion of Prince Talleyrand with regard to this affair?"

"He has been calumniated even in this," was C.'s reply, "and accused of having advised the measure; whereas his indignation on learning from Napoleon himself the step which had been taken, dictated the boldest and most eloquent speech which, perhaps, ever fell from his lips: 'Sire,' said he, warmly, 'a young man of family (*un enfant de famille*) may gamble away his last farthing—the heritage of his ancestors—the dower of his mother—the portion of his sisters—and yet be courted and admired for his wit—he sought for his talents or distinction—but let him once be detected in *cheating* at the game, and he is lost—society is for ever shut against him.' With these words he turned upon his heel, leaving the emperor pale and quivering with rage, and vowing vengeance against the bold speaker of the unwholesome truth. Such was the real opinion of the Prince de Talleyrand concerning this unprincipled transaction—the expression of the man who has been accused, not only of having been the instigator of the whole proceeding, but of having aided in its execution. 'Et voilà comme on écrit l'histoire!'"

CHAPTER IV.

CAGLIOSTRO—VOLTAIRE—THE MARQUIS DE J——.

IT was the hour of noon, and C. had kindly come to fetch me to the luncheon-room, where I found the guests all assembled, listening greedily to the conversation of the prince, who was that morning *en verre*, and relating with great good-nature the anecdotes which he had promised us on the preceding evening; the first claimant to be satisfied was, of course, by right, the youthful duchess, to whom he had held out hopes of the history of his famous visit to the great Cagliostro, and which I will give to the reader.

“It was just at the dawning of the new lights which had arisen on the political horizon,” began the prince, “or rather, I should say, perhaps, with more justice, at the first extinguishing of the old beacons which had served to guide our ancestors for ages, that so many new doctrinaires and charlatans of every kind came swarming in crowds to Paris. Those were, indeed, most troublous times. Every brain seemed reeling with political vertigo—every heart seemed to beat thick and fast, with an ardour hitherto unknown in the annals of any

country on the face of the globe. With the warm and passionate temperaments, enthusiasm had reached to frenzy, while, with the cold and passionless, it smouldered, a hidden fire, ready to burst out into lurid flame upon the first occasion of excitement.

“Among the many quacks and impostors who abounded at the time, none was more conspicuous than the famous Cagliostro. He had arrived from Italy under extraordinary and mysterious circumstances; his coming had been preceded by rumours more strange, more surprising still, and his door was besieged at once by all the rich and idle, the marvel-loving portion of the population of Paris. Among the rest, I am ashamed to confess that I was one of the most ardent. I was very young at the time, and had not acquired that distrust of all pretension which years alone can give. Many months, however, had elapsed before I could obtain the audience I so much coveted. Thousands of persons had to pass by right before me, and it was said that, immediately on his arrival, his books were so filled with the names of the highest and mightiest, that, had he been *just*, and received them each *in turn*, the candidates at the *bottom* of the list would have known their future by experience long before he could by any possible means have foretold it.

“I myself knew an officer in the regiment de Flandre, who, being quartered at Metz, and not being able to obtain from his colonel leave of absence, threw up his commission, in order to keep his appointment with Cagliostro on a certain day in Paris, so fearful was he of losing the valuable information concerning the future which the magician had to give him.

“I cannot even now repress a smile, when I remember the awe and terror with which I entered the presence of the conjuror. I had not dared to go alone; M. de Boufflers had kindly consented to accompany me; and yet my embarrassment was not wholly dissipated even with the prospect of his company; so fearful was I of missing the object of my visit, that I had wasted so much time in thinking of all the questions which I

meant to propound to him, as to have even written many of them upon my *calpin*, with the intention of consulting it in case of need. It was already dusk when we were admitted into the awful presence of the conjuror; not quite dark without doors, yet sufficiently so within to require the aid of tapers. The antechamber was filled with impatient applicants, who railed at us as we passed through the door of the chamber where the wizard was holding his incantations. The whole scene was very like those introduced in the early Spanish dramas, and inspired one with the most awful forebodings as to what was about to follow.

"We found the magician in his study. He was just at the moment engaged in dismissing two poor patients, to whom he had given advice gratuitously. The one was a crippled figure, whose distorted and haggard countenance formed a most fitting accessory to the scene of devilry, the other was an old mendicant friar, afflicted with the shaking palsy, whose restless limbs and hesitating speech made him appear as if under the influence of some wizard spell.

"As soon as we entered, Cagliostro led his guests to a door at the farther end of the chamber, which was veiled by a thick tapestry, and, opening it without the slightest noise, ushered them through it into the passage beyond, and then, closing it again with the same attention to silence, returned to the spot where we were standing, and, placing his finger on his lips, pointed towards a still and motionless figure seated in one corner of the room, and which, from the obscurity that reigned around, we had not observed on our entrance. The figure was that of a female, covered from head to foot with a veil of black crape, so long and ample that it disguised even the form of the fauteuil in which she was seated.

"Cagliostro bade us take seats at a table covered with green velvet, upon which were placed divers mysterious-looking instruments of torture, sundry queer-shaped bottles and diabolical volumes, and then, standing up before us, in solemn and biblical language inquired wherefore we had sought him, and what it was that we

desired to know. Such was the effect of the sudden questioning, the mystery of the interview, the silence and the darkness, that Boufflers, who was to have spoken first, and who had the reputation of being a *raffiné de premier ordre*, a *roué de la Régence*, was quite overawed by the whole scene, and could find no words to answer the summons, but sat stammering and hesitating, while I took the opportunity of examining slowly and at leisure the wondrous adept.

“Cagliostro was then a man in the very flower of his age, of exceedingly prepossessing appearance. His person, although small, was so well and firmly knit that its proportions seemed those of a much larger man. His countenance was remarkably keen and penetrating, being formed of a succession of sharp angular lines, which gave him a look of cunning that he would willingly have disguised, and with which the solemn tone and mysterious aspect were altogether at variance. His sharp piercing eyes I shall never forget; they absolutely seemed to light up the obscurity of the chamber, and, as they flashed from the one to the other of his visitors, they seemed to belong to some wild bird of prey hesitating between two victims which to devour first. His beard and eyebrows were black and bushy, with here and there a streak of grey amid their jetty blackness, telling more of the hand of woe than of the passage of time. When we entered, he had upon his head a velvet cap, which, with gentlemanlike courtesy, he doffed when he addressed us, and then I perceived that the summit of his crown was already bald, although his hair curled downward upon his neck and shoulders in a thick and silky mass. The hand which rested upon the table, and upon which he seemed to be leaning his whole weight as he stood in graceful and theatrical attitude, awaiting our communication, was small and delicate as that of a lady of the court, and shone out upon the dark green velvet as white as snow; and yet it needed not any very profound knowledge of anatomy to enable the beholder to discern at once that it was the hand of a man, possessed of most herculean strength and power, so vigorous were the firm knit

muscles, so well strung the tightened, cord-like nerves. I think he observed with some displeasure the curiosity with which I gazed towards it, for he withdrew it suddenly, and let it fall by his side.

“Boufflers still remaining mute, the conjuror turned to me, and asked me, in a voice which had already lost much of its solemnity, and partook of something like harshness, if I also had come unprepared with a subject of consultation, as, if so, we had best depart at once, and leave the field to others whose business might be of more importance, and who were waiting with such impatience without. The question roused all the courage which was left within me, for I began to fear that the magician might grow wearied, and dismiss us as he threatened, and I answered in a low voice that I wished to consult him concerning the health of a person who was dear to me. (I had already forgotten all the questions I had intended to propound, as well as the *calpin* which I had so laden with notes.)

“Cagliostro turned, and by a movement so abrupt and sudden that it made us both start to our feet, drew the fauteuil wherein was seated the veiled mysterious form of the female who had remained all this time silent and motionless, across the floor, and still the figure moved not. The feet resting on a board attached to the bottom of the fauteuil, moved with the rest, producing an indescribable effect. At the present day, when the mysteries of mesmerism have become common household talk, and somnambulism has been made a general *voie de guérison* for every complaint under heaven, all this will appear vain and puerile ceremony; but, at the period of which I am now speaking, they were familiar but to the initiated few, and Boufflers and I, poor ignorant novices, were struck with awe and wonder.

““What is it you seek to know?” said Cagliostro, resuming once more his solemn and theatrical air, and, drawing a little aside the veil of black crape, he bent towards the ear of the female, and whispered a few words which we could not understand.

“I was so afraid at the moment of losing, as my friend

Boufflers had already done, the memory of what I had to say, that I replied hurriedly, never thinking of myself, nor of the thousand and one questions which I had predetermined to ask—‘I wish to learn the cause of the migraine of my friend the Marquise de ——’

“‘Chut,’ interrupted Cagliostro. ‘The name is of little import. What see you?’ added he, in a loud deep tone, turning to the veiled figure.

“‘I see a fair and beauteous lady,’ replied a sweet soft voice from beneath the veil. ‘She is attired in a dress of sea-green Padua silk, her powdered hair is wreathed with rosebuds, and she wears long and splendid eardrops of emerald and topaz.’

“Boufflers caught my arm, with a smile, which the excitement of the moment had converted into a grimace, for he knew well enough the person for whom I was so anxious, and knew, moreover, that there were certain nights on which she wore the emerald and topaz suit, and that this very night was one of them. The veiled form continued, in the same low voice: ‘The lady is pressing her hand to her brow at this very instant. Is it with pain, or is it with care? She is waiting for some one, for now she rises and looks at the clock upon the console, and now she goes to the small side-door to listen.’

“‘Enough, enough,’ said I, in my turn, growing impatient; ‘tell me at once what it is that ails the lady, and what may be the remedy.’

“The figure spoke aloud no more, but whispered long in Cagliostro’s ear, and the latter, turning to me, said, with ease and *aplomb*, ‘The lady’s migraines are caused by overwatching and anxiety—the *cure* is easy, and must be applied at once—the *cause* will be removed in time.’

“He pushed back the fauteuil into the corner whence he had drawn it; the veiled figure by which it was occupied remained still and motionless as death. He then opened a small door in the wainscot, belonging to a cupboard filled with shelves, containing bottles of all sorts and sizes, and drew from it a phial, which he filled from

a jug of that which stood upon the floor, and having performed various '*passes*' and evolutions over it, he handed it to me, bidding my companion and myself to lose no time in retiring, for others were waiting outside.

"His dismissal of us was as abrupt as possible, scarcely, indeed, consistent with politeness. 'You have told your ailments and your griefs—you bear with you the never-failing cure—now begone.'

"With these words he opened the same low door through which he had let out the two visitors whom we had succeeded; and Boufflers and I passed out, obeying, without a word, the gesture of the magician, which pointed towards the passage beyond.

"Such is the history of my first interview with the great Cagliostro. To you, who behold daily the strange and varied examples of magnetism, my story will perhaps appear pale and puerile; but you must remember that, at the time, the thing was new, and, notwithstanding all that has been discovered since, none has surpassed him; even to this very hour, the secret of Cagliostro has not been discovered. It is supposed that ventriloquism was much employed by him in his various *tours de force*. Perhaps it was made the agent of deception in my own case, and the figure veiled with black crape may have been a mere puppet set up to delude the credulous. The circumstance which would seem to favour greatly the suspicion of imposture is, that, as Cagliostro never employed twice the same agency, the *consultant* could never come *prepared* to watch and detect the machinery of his experiments, and in fact, being always taken by surprise, had no leisure to think of anything else than the consultation he had come to hold. Again, how *could* the adept have known, by natural means, that the Marquise de Br*, whom he had not suffered me to name, was young and beautiful—that she possessed cardrops of emerald and topaz, which mixture of jewels was peculiar, and that she would wear them on that very night? All these reflections completely bewildered me, as I hastened on to the Opera, certain that the marquise would be there, full of

curiosity to see if her dress and appearance would correspond with Cagliostro's description. Boufflers could not help me, nor suggest a single idea to solve the mystery, so absorbed was he in the memory of the strange scene he had been witnessing—so completely wonderstruck by the silence and mystery of the whole proceeding.

"We arrived at the Opera just as the curtain was about to rise. I shall never forget the performance, so linked is it in memory with that night's adventure. It was Gluck's opera of '*Alceste*.' Boufflers and myself took our places in the parterre, immediately below the loge of the marquise, which was empty, and remained so for some time; and I can assure you that, when, in the midst of one of the most pathetic scenes of the opera, I heard the door of the box open, and a valet-de-chambre announce, as was the usage among the fashionables of the day, '*Madame la Marquise de Br***,' we both turned sharply round. She entered, muffled up to the chin, and evidently suffering greatly from her old enemy, the migraine, for she held a screen before her eyes to shield them from the glare of light, and bent her head upon her hand as soon as she had taken her seat.

"*'Look! she has roses in her hair.'* exclaimed Boufflers, all aghast.

"It was true enough the roses were there; and I could see even more, for the cardrops of emerald and topaz caught the light of the girandole in front of her box, and played before my eyes in a most tantalizing manner.

"Presently the marquise, overcome by the heat, withdrew her cloak and muffles, and stood revealed to us in the full light, exactly as she had been described to us so short a time before. The dress of sea-green Padua silk, looped with roses, seemed completely to choke poor Boufflers, as he stood gazing on her in mute amazement. So far, the wizard had told us truth. Since his day, the same experiment has been repeated, and in thousands of instances has succeeded. You have all, I doubt not, some little story of the kind to tell, much more striking

and interesting than mine, but the sequel of my anecdote, I think, may be unique, so completely did the adventure jump from the sublime to the ridiculous at a single bound.

“At the conclusion of the piece we both repaired to the box of the Marquise de Br***. She was suffering greatly from her migraine, and greeted me ironically, observing that I was ‘*bien aimable et bien galant*’—that she had waited for me to escort her to the Opera, and had been compelled to depart from home alone. After the performance, we all adjourned to her hotel. I had completely reinstated myself in her good graces, by the promise of a complete cure for her migraine. The gentlemen of the company, however, all voted that a glass or two of champagne should be tried first, before the dear marquise was put to pain and torture by any of the diabolical remedies of the sorcerer, Cagliostro. The vote was carried, and the marquise compelled to submit to their prescription first, which she did with the greatest grace and good humour, using every effort to appear gay, although evidently suffering much pain at the very moment.

“I will not attempt to record all the good things which were uttered at the *petit souper*, nor all the *idées folles* to which the champagne gave birth. Boufflers was quite himself again, and had recovered all his wonted vivacity, all his mad gaiety, and kept us in a roar of laughter by his wicked sallies and pointed jokes concerning our visit to Cagliostro. He counterfeited with such excessive humour the whole scene as it had passed before his eyes, that no one could have imagined him to be the same individual who had sat quaking in fear and awe before the very man whose power he was now deriding in such exquisite glee.

“Of course the phial and the contents became soon the objects of attack, and I was petitioned on all sides for a view of them. By the permission of the marquise herself, I yielded to the clamour, and it was handed round amid the commentaries of the laughing guests, until Boufflers proposed that the remedy should at once

be tried in the presence of us all, so that, if it failed, we might at once go and give Cagliostro the *charivari* which he would so richly deserve; and, if it succeeded, we might publish its virtues and the compounder's skill throughout the world.

"It was not till I had uncorked the phial, and was about to pour it into a glass, that it all at once occurred to me, that, in the hurry of our dismissal from the presence of Cagliostro, I had entirely omitted to ascertain whether the liquid was to be taken as a medicine, or to be applied externally. To the eye, it was nothing but pure water from the fountain, it possessed neither smell nor colour, and the greatest curiosity was excited to behold its marvellous effects. At length, by the suggestion of the marquise herself, who was growing weary of our *budinage*, it was decided that there would be less danger in misapplying it externally than in swallowing it, should it prove pernicious; and as I was chosen to be the operator, I poured a small quantity of the water into the hollow of my hand, which Boufflers guiding, so that not a drop was spilt, I placed gently as possible over the forehead of the marquise, pressing it there, but certainly not with violence, and, supporting the back of her head with the hand that was free, held her thus, awaiting the result.

"The marquise closed her eyes, but uttered not a word, and there was a moment's silence among the clamorous group bending over her with such eager curiosity to witness the effect of the miraculous cure, when suddenly it was broken by a loud convulsive shriek from the marquise herself, which was almost echoed by many of those present, so sudden and startling did it burst from her lips. 'Take away your hand! For God's sake, take away your hand!' exclaimed she, in a voice of agony; and, starting to her feet, she endeavoured, with all her strength, to pull my wrist downwards. But strange to tell, not all the efforts of the marquise, nor those I used myself, could tear away my hand from her forehead! No words can describe the sensation of terror with which I found myself not only deprived of

the faculty of withdrawing my arm, but drawn by some powerful attraction closer and closer still, until it almost seemed as if the fingers were about to bury themselves in the flesh.

“ At first, as you may suppose, it was imagined by those present that the whole event was a jest, and the piteous shrieks of the marquise, and my own supplications for assistance, had at first been greeted with roars of laughter: but when it was found that the affair was serious, the company began to take alarm. It was not, however, till the unfortunate marquise sank back in her chair, fainting and exhausted, that the Duc d'Argenton, recovering from the consternation into which the discovery of the extraordinary event had thrown the whole assembly, seized my wrist in a nervous grasp, and tore it by main force away, drawing with it large patches of skin from the forehead of the marquise, upon which the imprint of my touch remained in bleeding characters. My hand was torn and lacerated likewise, and the pain was unbearable. I bound it in my handkerchief, and gave all the assistance in my power towards the recovery of Madame de Br * *, who was conveyed to bed, still in a deep swoon. We all remained in the saloon, which had so lately been the scene of our mad gaiety, with downcast looks and subdued voices, waiting the report of the surgeon who had been sent for to apply the proper remedies to the wounds of the marquise, who was not pronounced out of danger till towards morning. We then dispersed, with the firm determination of having the mystery cleared by Cagliostro himself as soon as possible. Boufflers instantly repaired to M. de Sartines, the head of the police, and he furnished us with two officers, and with all power to make search at the magician's house, or take any step which we might deem necessary.

“ Cagliostro received the visit with the greatest *sans froid*, and, without the slightest resistance, allowed the officer to prosecute his search among the various tools and utensils which he employed in his calling. The large jug from which he had taken the liquid contained

in the phial which he had given to me, still stood in the same place as on the preceding day. There remained but a few drops, for his patients had been numerous, but these the officer poured into a bottle and conveyed to the nearest chemist, who laughed in the man's face, and pronounced them to be clear water. To my bitter reproaches and angry exclamations, Cagliostro replied, with perfect calmness, that the liquid was pure and innocent when he placed it in my hands, and that if it had grown pernicious it must have been owing to the guilty passions or to the evil sympathies of those who had used it. No further explanation could be elicited, and the affair, which made a great noise at the time, remains a mystery to this hour. As for me, I lost an amiable and valued friend, for the Marquise de Br * *, either through fear of the ridicule which attached to the adventure, or from memory of the pain which she had suffered, could never endure me to approach her after that. She would not even grant me an interview in order to express my regrets at the strange accident which had happened. She avoided me when by chance we met in public, scarcely even returning my salutation, but by a cold and formal acknowledgment. She refused all the efforts of our mutual friends at effecting a reconciliation, and, wearied with my importunities (for I really felt anxious to do away the unjust impression), she ended by returning my letters of apologies and supplications unopened."

The prince paused thoughtfully. The story was at an end.

"Did there remain a scar or trace of the wound which the marquise had incurred?" said Madame de V——.

"She carried the mark of that night's adventure to her grave," replied the prince; "a long, narrow scar, which all the art of the coiffeur could not disguise. The corner of one of her exquisitely traced eyebrows, too, had been torn off, and never grew again; but she replaced it with great effect by an *assassin*, which she wore there ever after."

The prince paused again for a moment, and then added, while a smile, full of malicious glee, of exquisite *finesse*, passed across his countenance, "The *girandole* eardrops of emerald and topaz she not only wore no more, but had the cruelty to bestow upon her maid, who adorned herself with them at the next Opera ball, whither she was sent by her mistress to *intriguer* me, while the lovely marquise replaced them at times with long pendants of snowy pearl, emblem of innocence and simplicity, and I soon began to observe, with bitterness, that, on these occasions, whether I proposed Opera, ball, or play, Boufflers always had some 'particular engagement' which prevented him from joining our party."

Many were the comments upon this adventure, and many the discussions upon the possible contents of the phial, which it would be absurd to suppose consisted of nought but pure water. Some defended Cagliostro, others were loud against him, when the dear Duchess de V——, fearing that the time might be lost in dissertations on mesmerism, suddenly exclaimed, "Dear prince, you who have seen so many great men in your time, did you ever see Voltaire?"

"Yes, indeed, fair lady, I *did* once behold M. de Voltaire," (the prince always called him so to the last day of his life,) "and my interview with him is connected in my mind with a curious fact. The narrative of my adventure may perhaps amuse you. It was in 1778, the year before his death, that I had the singular good fortune to obtain an audience of the great philosopher. He lived at the corner of the Rue de Beaune and the quai which has since been called by his name. He had intimated to my friend, Champfort, his great desire to become acquainted with me, and I, who all my life had been tormented with the wish to behold this greatest genius of the age, the master spirit of his own time, the guide of that which was to follow, did not need a second bidding.

"The philosopher received us with great urbanity. He had been prepared for our visit in the morning, for he still loved dearly all kinds of form and ceremony,

and, to the very last day of his life, set a higher price upon his title of *M. de Voltaire* (which, by the by, was usurped) than on the popular and honourable abbreviation of '*Voltaire*,' *tout court*, by which he was designated long before his death. *M. de Voltaire* was seated on the edge of his bed, attired in one of those short loose dressing-gowns much worn at the time, and which displayed his spindle legs and shrunken feet in all their unveiled ugliness. Never have I beheld a form so withered, so diminished; every vein in his whole frame was visible and defined, like those in an anatomical study. The later portraits of *M. de Voltaire* give a very just idea of his appearance, but they generally fail in expressing the singular look of the eyes—an expression which I never have seen in any one since that time—an anxious, unquiet, restless look—a hungry, thirsty, keenly-searching glance (hunger and thirst of praise), and searching with avidity for admiration, which, such was the *Voltairean* fever of the time, he never failed to obtain, and yet, as '*l'appetit vient en mangeant*,' never wholly satisfied this craving.

"The room wherein the great man received his visitors was entirely darkened (such was his whim), save where one single shutter, folded back, allowed the light to stream in through a long, narrow aperture, immediately opposite to which he himself was placed, so that he became thus the sole object clearly visible in the apartment. And here he sat to receive visitors, although, the sun shining at the moment, the light was so strong that it must almost have blinded him. His niece, Madame Denis, '*belle et bonne*,' was seated at the foot of the bed near the chimney, attired in a dimity camisole, rather soiled, and her hair, escaping in disorder from the little cap placed on the top of her head, was tied in a fantastical *fontange* with a faded blue ribbon. She was no longer young, poor *belle et bonne*, and her sedentary life had induced a degree of corpulence which made her look older still. She had certainly forfeited all pretensions to her first title, and there was much in her face that, to a physiognomist, would have given a flat contradiction to

the second. She had evidently been engaged in writing from M. de Voltaire's dictation, for she had risen from the bureau, and turned to the fire, where there was placed some cooking utensil, to which she soon directed her attention.

"But it was not long before I had forgotten the very existence of Madame Denis, in the interest of the conversation with M. de Voltaire himself. He spoke quickly and nervously, with a play of feature I have never seen in any man except him. His eye kindled with a vivid fire almost dazzling, as it danced in the ray of sunlight from the window, and moved about from one to the other of his listeners, rapid and quivering like the summer lightning. He had just been receiving, that very morning, a deputation from the Théâtre Français, begging permission to commence the performance of 'Zaïre' that evening with a complimentary address to himself, which permission of course the poet had granted with an enviable self-satisfaction, merely requesting that the verses should be submitted to his own inspection, and subjected to his own corrections and improvements, if any such were needed. He was in high good humour at this mark of honour and distinction, for, as I have said before, flattery had become of more importance to his existence than the very food and nourishment of each day.

"When the great man had conversed for some little time with my friend, with whom he had been intimate for many years, he turned to me, and, after courteously expressing the pleasure which my visit gave him, he added, 'I had desired to see you, M. de Perigord, to communicate to you a fact concerning your family, which happened some years ago, and may be of importance to you hereafter. As you are the youngest of your family, you may one day like to be its chronicler.'

"He then commenced the relation of some interesting particulars regarding the Talleyrands and Perigords, intermixing, with a precision of memory quite marvellous, the different branches and connexions, either by birth or marriage. All these, of course, were familiar to me, but,

as it was not natural that a narrator like M. de Voltaire should ever tell a story without a point, all this preamble ended in a tale of interest and wonder which completely riveted my whole attention, and kept me in a thrill of delight, not so much by the story itself, which, however, was full of most powerful interest, as by the irresistible charm of the diction. I can safely affirm that M. de Voltaire spoke with even more ease and grace than distinguish his writings. I think he would have made a splendid orator. His words seemed to *fly* from his lips, so rapid, yet so neat, so distinct and clear, was every expression. His meaning was so precisely defined, that you never had an instant's doubt or hesitation whether you were quite sure that you fully understood him. The language of Champfort, bold and vigorous as it was—full of fire and passion—seemed to lack energy and spirit as he answered M. de Voltaire. The fire of the one was like the red beacon-light, steady and strong, lurid and fierce; the other was the treacherous spark, which, flying upwards in seemingly harmless sport, yet driven this way or that by the most trifling breeze, may spread ruin and devastation wherever it may chance to fall.

“We remained for more than an hour with the great philosopher. *Belle et bonne* had completed the cooking of her chocolate, and M. de Voltaire had taken it, without the slightest ceremony, in our presence. Letters had arrived, to some few of which he had dictated short replies through the medium of his niece. I had listened in rapture to the story which I had come to hear: Champfort had already been twice confuted in argument, and M. de Voltaire obliged once to yield, before we arose to depart, and even then I think we were hurried away by Madame Denis, who reminded her uncle, with a look full of meaning at us, that it was just the hour for his siesta: which clear, unmistakable hint, of course, we immediately took, and left him to enjoy his repose unmolested. I looked at him long and earnestly as he shook me cordially by the hand, and bade me a most paternal farewell. Every line of that remarkable countenance is engraven on my memory. I see it now be-

fore me—the small fiery eyes staring from the shrunken sockets, not unlike those of aameleon; the dried and withered cheek, traversed in every direction by deep cut lines; the compressed lips and puckered mouth, round which played a perpetual, sarcastic smile, giving him altogether the air of a merry fiend. Every feature of that face is as present to my memory now as it was at that moment while I was gazing on it, impressed with a kind of sorrowful conviction that I should behold it no more.

“The event proved that I was right in my presentiment: M. de Voltaire, soon after that, denied himself entirely to strangers, and none but his intimate friends were admitted. These, however, were sufficiently numerous to form a little court around him, and to do him all the honour which he so much loved, and amid which he died, surrounded by flatterers and sycophants until the latest hour of his life.”

“Now, if it is not an indiscretion, do tell us the story that he told you, prince,” exclaimed the Princess de C——, as Prince Talleyrand concluded his recital: “do tell us the tale that Voltaire could think worthy a place in his memory: it must be a curious one. Try and recount it in the same manner that he used when telling it to you. I am sure you would imitate it admirably.”

The prince smiled, (he never laughed,) as he replied, “Now have I to make a strange confession, for which I know you will never pardon me, and which I would willingly have been spared. Indeed, had it not happened to myself, I could scarcely have credited it. On leaving Voltaire, Champfort and myself had separated: he had taken the direction of the Tuileries, and I had sauntered along to the Palais Royal, thinking all the while of the great man to whose presence I had just been admitted, and retracing in memory every word, every gesture, he had used during the interview. In the garden I was accosted by the young Duc d’Aiguillon, who had just arrived from Versailles, and who began in his usual rattling manner telling me a long story about the ball which had taken place the evening before in the

Orangerie, of which story, mark you, I remember every word. It was about the Duchesse de Levis, a sort of court butt just at that time, and the changing of her shoulder-knot by some wag, which *plaisanterie* had caused the most laughable mistakes during the whole ball.

“When I had got rid of this wild talker, I adjourned to the hotel of the Marquise de J——, where there was *grande reception*, followed by *grand jeu* and *souper*. There I remained until a late hour of the night, alternately winning and losing considerable sums at the faro table, until I rose winner of a hundred and twenty louis d’or from Maurice Duvernay, of which he paid me seventy down, but having lost immensely, wrote an order for the rest on the back of one of the Queens of Diamonds.

“I tell you all this to show you that I can, to this very hour, account for every minute of that day, one of the most memorable of my whole life, from the moment of my leaving M. de Voltaire; and when I returned home, late as was the hour, before retiring to rest I sat down to begin a letter to my uncle, the Cardinal de Perigord, in order to recount to him the adventure of the morning, and, above all, to tell him the anecdote concerning our family which M. de Voltaire had related, and in which I knew my uncle would take a most peculiar delight, both from the source whence it came, and the personal interest inspired by the subject. Judge, then, of the mortification I experienced upon finding that, in spite of all my endeavours to collect my wandering ideas to the one point in question, I could not recollect the story which M. de Voltaire had been at so much pains to tell me, to which I had listened with so much attention and with such extraordinary relish: I could not even write in my letter the immediate object of the story—neither detail, nor hero, nor point. (which last I remembered had diverted me beyond measure.) would present itself to my remembrance; and, after much vexation of spirit, I was fain to leave my letter unfinished, until I had met with Champfort, whose memory I doubted not would be fully able to supply the deficiency of mine.

“I was determined to lose no time in assuring myself

of this, and called upon the poet the very next day. What, think you, was his answer to my urgent entreaties that he would assist me? ‘Parbleu, *mon cher*, I was too much occupied in thinking what I should say to M. de Voltaire, to notice what *he* was saying to me. I heard not a word of his story, but you must own that I completely succeeded in proving the false quantity in the second canto of the *Henriade*.’

“He had not even heard the story! so there was no hope in that quarter, and I was obliged to content myself with the trust, that at some future day I might be fortunate enough again to meet M. de Voltaire, and induce him to tell the tale once more. As I have already said, however, I had not the good fortune to see him afterwards.

“Often and often, in the long years that have passed since then, have I endeavoured to catch the purport of his tale, but in vain. The whole scene of that interview rises at command—the welcome, the farewell, and the various arguments of the two *beaux-esprits*—but that narrative, which I would often give much to remember, is gone for ever! The pre-occupation of the scene, the wonder, the delight inspired by the philosopher’s conversation, have left a blank, which neither time nor reflection have ever been able to fill up: and even now I cannot remember the incident, without feeling the same kind of embarrassment which I experienced on that occasion, and often surprise myself, when falling into reverie, chasing the phantoms of that hour through my puzzled brain, and endeavouring, in spite of experience, to arrest the fugitive impressions made by the story at the time, but without success.”

The prince now paused, and leant back in his chair for a moment, with his eyes closed, evidently lost in thought. It was well that no one spoke, or we might have been deprived of the tale which followed, and in which, at the age I was then, I took more interest, and remembered with more pleasure, than any which had preceded it.

“How mysterious a thing is memory,” said he, as he

bent forward once more, and smiled upon his listeners. "The name of Champfort has brought to my mind the story, long-forgotten, of his fellow-prisoner, a young officer, formerly in the mousquetaires. His name we all know, for he is among us still, and, in short, he has promised that he will visit us, before the autumn is over, here at Valençay. He was, without exception, the handsomest youth I have ever seen; and his manners and address being remarkable for a grace peculiarly his own, and his reputation for high courage and chivalrous bearing having been fully established by one or two *affaires brillantes* in which he had been engaged, it may naturally be supposed that his *succès* of every kind left him nothing to desire. But he sought no conquest, even where the enemy held out offers of surrender; he seemed callous and indifferent to all the advances, the allurements, of which he was the object, until, such was the state of morals at that time, the ladies of the great world in which he moved began to act as spies upon each other, being fully convinced of the impossibility of his having remained so long insensible to the arts and blandishments by which he was surrounded.

"For a long time his secret remained impenetrable: his part was so well acted, his measures so well taken, that the scandal-mongers were in despair, and the charitable souls, of whom there are always a few, were beginning to hope, when the mystery was divulged in a most extraordinary manner, and formed the town talk for many a day: and, as the story has been told with divers variations, and has got abroad under different versions, I will tell you the right one, which I had from the Marquis de J——'s own lips:—

"In those days there were *fermiers généraux*, and the said *fermiers généraux* were almost always among the oldest, ugliest, richest, and most disagreeable men that the kingdom could produce. One of these, who united in himself all these superlatives, had just deceived all the cherished hopes of the ladies of the court by marrying a young girl from his own province, of noble birth, although of slender fortune, who was described as being of little

beauty, and glad to acquire by marriage, wealth and station, even at the sacrifice of those other qualities in a husband which are generally sought for by young ladies.

“A year had elapsed since the return of M. de B. from Besançon, where the marriage had taken place. No one had seen his bride; she remained entirely at his country house—a delicious little ‘Folie,’ so it was said, at Auteuil, close to the Bois de Boulogne. The lady had not been presented at court, and M. de B. had never requested any of his friends to visit her, so that she was at first supposed to be imbecile or ugly, and was then forgotten. But the devil’s hoof, which certainly is busy with all men’s concerns, trotted one day through the muddled brain of the old Dowager de Marville, and suggested to her that it would be a mighty pleasant thing to have a *feu d’artifice* in the Bois de Boulogne, on some dark night when there would be no moon, and that it would be quite a funny sight to behold all the skirts of the wood festooned with coloured lamps, and adorned with flambeaux: and then she began to torment M. de B. to throw open his ‘Folie’ to the *élite*, and give a fête there to his friends without delay. He was a good-natured man, but, nevertheless, he took a great deal of persuading before he would consent to have his privacy thus broken in upon. He offered the ladies of his acquaintance a ball at his own hôtel in Paris, with interludes of opera-dancers. But no, the fête at the ‘Folie’—nothing else would do, and the poor man was obliged at last to promise the much-desired entertainment. His excuses had all a relation to his wife; her ignorance of the world, her innocence and utter simplicity had all been put forward as motives for refusing, but no excuse could be taken. Give the fête he must, and the ladies, on their part, promised to treat the rustic bride with indulgence, and not to crush her by too great an assumption of superiority.

“The day of the fête arrived. The most brilliant anticipations had been formed of the entertainment to be given in such a sweet place, by so rich a man, and

they were most certainly not disappointed. Every arrangement was of the best, and the whole place illuminated like a dream of fairy-land; which last circumstance did not vex the ladies so much as one would have imagined, for it helped to prove that the opinions which had been formed of the bride of M. de B. were correct in all points. She was very young, very timid, and very reserved and *gauche*, like a little *pensionnaire de convent* as she was; and, what was worse, like all *provinciales*, who think nothing more beautiful than what is to be found in their own province, she never once expressed the slightest admiration or astonishment at anything she saw—nay, she preserved the same cold, unmoved air, even when her husband presented to her, in due form, the vanquisher of all hearts, the renowned Marquis de J——! Some of the ladies said that she was pretty; some said not; some, that she might become dangerous in time, from her paleness and the languishing expression of her eyes. Others again laughed at this opinion, and felt sure that there would never be anything to dread from her. These last expressed surprise that she had even made the conquest of her stupid old husband.

“Well, the company left the ‘Folie,’ enchanted with their entertainment, and dispersed at daybreak to their respective hotels, without so much as bestowing a thought either on Madame de B. or her husband. The next day, however, loud was the wailing among the ladies, for the Marquis de J—— was missing from all his accustomed haunts, where he had been used daily to charm the eyes and captivate the hearts of his fair admirers. Kind and anxious messages were despatched to his quarters, and the answer given was, that the Marquis was slightly indisposed, but would appear again in a day or two. The next rumour afloat was, that old B., the *fermier-général*, had sent back his wife to the convent from which he had taken her the year before to marry her; but no one felt astonishment at this—so cold, so awkward, so shy—not even polite to the Marquis de J——! Of course, poor old B. must feel assured that he never could get on in the world with such a wife as that.

“The marquis appeared again in a few days after the fête, but much altered in appearance, with haggard, melancholy look, and sad, dejected spirits. His arm was in a sling, too, which gave rise to more tender questioning, which he sought to parry as well as he was able, by saying that he had met with an accident at M. de B.’s ‘Folie.’

“The history of the case was this. (Oh, *jeune France*, know you what even the meaning of the word ‘love’ is?) After the company had departed, M. and Madame de B—— had retired to their respective apartments, but M. de B——, being unable to sleep, had descended into the garden to take a refreshing walk amid the groves, where still hung suspended the variegated *lampions*, extinguished, drowning with their vile odour the scent of the flowers. There was no moon, but the night was wearing away, and the dawn was just beginning to change the pitchy darkness to a pale tint of grey, when M. de B—— thought of retiring towards the house. Just as he was in the act of mounting the steps which led to the long glass windows of his own room, his attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps on the gravel walk beneath. He was by no means a coward, M. de B——, and his first thought was of his wife, and of the alarm which a hue and cry, raised at such an hour, might occasion her: so after calling ‘*Qui vive?*’ and receiving no answer, he slid gently down over the balustrade of the *perron* into the flower-garden below, feeling quite sure of the capture of the thief, as the little plot of ground belonging to his wife’s apartment had no communication with the park, save by a door of which she herself always kept the key. He ran lightly over the grass, and along the gravel-walk; he could hear retreating footsteps; as he advanced he was sure of this, but the bushes overhung the narrow pathway in such luxuriance, that he could not discern the form which he was pursuing. At length he reached the bottom of the path—he distinctly heard the swinging of the gate as it was opened cautiously—he made one frantic bound across the flower-bed which skirted the path—the door *must* have been opened by some one.

for it banged—to just as he approached—he heard a faint cry on the outer side, and then all was silent as the grave. M. de B—— could proceed no farther, for the key was not in the lock, and the door was closed, but he immediately sought the apartment of his wife, full of alarm concerning her, and dreading lest some thief, lured by the display of jewels which she had worn on the previous evening, might have endeavoured to force an entry through the ill-secured glass-windows of the chamber, which looked into the garden. To his utter astonishment, after having with difficulty regained his own room, and thence by the inner passages of the house arrived at the chamber of his wife, he found her up and dressed, still decked with the same jewels which she had worn at the fete. She evinced great alarm and trepidation at first on hearing his recital, but, after a moment's reflection, declared her belief that M. de B—— must have been under the influence of a dream, as she had herself been standing at the window taking the air, and had heard no sound nor beheld any shadow pass. He asked for the key of the gate: she had mislaid it, she said, and, the gate being so seldom used, she had not cared to search for it. So M. de B—— was fain to content himself with this assurance until daybreak, when he was determined to renew his search more minutely. The garden was torn and trampled towards the direction of the gate, but that might be by his own footsteps, for he had hurried in his pursuit after the flying thief. The gate was closed and locked, and yet there was still some mystery in the adventure, for, on the outer side, which opened into the park, the ground was stained by drops of blood, which could be traced to some little distance, and then ceased altogether. Here was more mystery still, for the gardener, on searching amid the bushes, found the key of the gate, which had so long been missing. M. de B—— instantly applied it to the lock, and the door yielded slowly and with difficulty to his endeavours to push it forward, and when at length it opened, and the obstacle was sought for, it was found to be a *human finger*, crushed and jammed against the door-

post, which, upon a close inspection, appeared to have been cut off close to the root by some rude and hurried operation.

“ Alas! Madame de B——, who had remained calm and passive during the whole of this adventure, could not support this last disclosure, but was seized with violent hysterics upon being informed of the discovery which had taken place, and in the midst of her tears and convulsions, the name of the Marquis de J—— was for ever on her lips. Of course the adventure could no longer be kept secret; the coincidence of the wound, the utterance of the name of M. de J——, determined at once the nature of the occurrence. He himself described to me the terror of his flight through the flower-garden, the agony of fear with which he hurried forth lest *she* should be discovered. It was M. de B——, who, in pushing against the door, had jammed his finger in the lock, but he cared not for the pain so long as *she* was safe, and secure from all suspicion, and, disdaining to call for help, he had himself drawn forth the little pocket-knife which he always carried, and cut off the finger by which he was detained. He had never once thought of the danger or disfigurement; he did it, not complaining, but rejoicing to think that *she* was unsuspected at least, and her reputation secure. His only regret was at having lost the key of the gate, which he had dropped among the bushes, when he had stopped to bandage with his pocket-handkerchief the bleeding wound. Had *she* not betrayed herself in her grief for him, their secret might yet have been kept. M. de J—— left Paris soon after, and travelled for some years, and Madame de B—— was despatched back again to the convent of Besançon, from which she had not been absent more than a twelvemonth in all. It is said that M. de J—— remained for ever faithful to his first love. It is certain that when he returned among us, handsome, brilliant as before, although less gay, he never sought to inspire affection in any of the fair ladies who were at so much pains to please him. He steadily refused all offers

of marriage which were made him, although some of the most splendid *partis*, both maids and widows, were among the number. From the first moment of his beholding Madame de B——, which was on her arrival with her husband, while changing horses at the last relay towards Paris, at the post-house, where he happened to be halting with his troop—he had owned himself her slave: he vowed to me for years afterwards, that no other woman should ever boast of having won a thought from him, and that no other female hand should ever feel the pressure of his own. His heart was with her who was suffering loneliness and captivity for his sake, and he regarded as sacrilege the idea of a possibility that he could break his vow of fidelity to her. At the revolution, he was imprisoned, but released *sans de preuves*, and, meanwhile, the convents having been broken up and dispersed, his first step was to secure a safe retreat for Madame de B——. Together they fled to Holland, where they remained for some years, and returned, when the storm was over, as man and wife. They lived together in happiness, and we all can bear witness to the grace and distinction which she shed around the circle she frequented, and to the respect with which she inspired all who approached her, as well as to the regret which was universally felt when she was withdrawn from us for ever. Such is the true story of the Marquis de J——: now tell me, *Jeune France*, will ye dare to condemn the *ancien régime*, or say that you even understand the depth of devotion and of love from which such faith as this could spring?"

The prince rose as he concluded his story, and the grating of carriage-wheels on the gravel-walk without the windows announced the hour for the promenade. I took my seat in one of the landaus by the side of C., who had promised to show me the lions of the place, but it was some time before I could command my attention to the beauties of the scene, for the story of the prince had brought back the memory of my last *soirée*

in Paris, where I had beheld a withered old man playing with avidity at *bouillotte*, and I remembered to have been startled and disgusted when he took up his cards in a *three-fingered* grasp. And now I remembered, too, that his partner had addressed him by the name of De J——.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDHOOD AND JUVENILE YEARS OF TALLEYRAND.

Our drive was delightful over the green turf beneath the arched vista of the old avenue. The rain-drops glittered on every leaf, and the turf, moistened by the shower, after the long drought, sent up a delicious fragrance beneath each pressure of our horses' feet. The prince was alone in his carriage, with his dog Carlo. There was but one person in the whole world whom he ever allowed to take the seat beside him in his drives, and she was that day absent from Valençay. There was something touching and poetical in the solitary figure as he reclined back, leaning on his cane, not gazing on the landscape, but musing, abstracted and motionless, save that from time to time he would bend slightly forward, and pat old Carlo fondly on the neck, as if his train of thought had led him into recollections of the long attachment of the faithful animal, contrasting it, perhaps, with the treachery and ingratitude which he had met with in man.

In the poetic fervour of the moment I could not help hazarding this supposition to my friend, who laughed

heartily at my youthful enthusiasm, but declared that it was never so ill-bestowed, for that it had been subject of astonishment that the Prince was never known to give way, after the fashion of age, to any of those loud and bitter railings against the injustice and ingratitude of mankind, which sometimes render the society of elderly persons liable to the complaint of querulousness and discontent, and yet none had ever perhaps better cause of complaint than he has had.

"The destiny of that man," said C., musingly, and scarcely conscious that he was speaking aloud, "has been a most singular and mysterious one. Each great event of his life might serve as a type of the people among whom it took place, and illustrative of the times in which it *could* have happened. The history of his childhood alone would serve to paint the epoch." It was one of the latest examples of a style of morals and manners which the great revolution wholly swept away. He was born in Paris, in the year 1754. As was usual with families of distinction at that period, a nurse had been provided, who lodged in the hotel for some time previously to the birth of the expected babe, so that immediately on the arrival of the offensive object, she might be at hand to carry it away. This arrangement was most agreeable and convenient. In a little space the mother re-appeared, brilliant and gay as ever, amid the circles she had deserted but for a moment. She had to endure at first, on the part of her *essaim d'adorateurs*, some few tender reproaches upon her cruelty in having deprived her friends of the charm of her society 'for so many centuries,' some few *grivois* remarks upon the *accident* which had caused this absence, and then the event was forgotten by all, even by the lady herself, who resumed, with increased ardour, her gambling and flirtations, while the poor wretched infant, abandoned by its natural protectors, and condemned to the care of mercenaries, was left either to vegetate in ignorance and filth, or to die without even having known a single moment of its mother's love.

"Such was the fate of Charles Maurice, the eldest

son of the Comte de Talleyrand. Hurried from the paternal home in the very hour of his birth, he was taken into a distant part of the country by a nurse whose trade it was to tend and bring up children *tant bien que mal*, as he himself has often said. Here he remained until he had arrived at the age of seven years. The nurse was regularly paid—her reports of the child were always good—he was her ‘*cher coco*’—‘the darling of her heart,’ ‘the pride of the whole country.’ He was well in health—he had fresh air and exercise—he wanted neither food nor clothing—what then could the boy require more than all these? His mother must have answered this question, if ever she put it to herself, most satisfactorily; for it is certain she continued the business of her life—the *petit jeu*, the *grand jeu*, the *petit lever*, the *grand lever*—with as much energy and ardour as if no child had ever been. About this time, however, another ‘*fâcheux accident*’ occurred—the birth of another son. Again was the lady obliged to retire for a while; again were her sentimental swains in deep distress. The second son appeared, and, like the first, was full of health and vigour: like the eldest, cast in the mould of a manly race, with neither spot nor blemish. Such had been the will of God—but how was his goodly work perverted!

“The poor little new-comer was, like Charles Maurice, despatched to the same village where *he* still dwelt—revelling in village ignorance and liberty, with no care and no constraint, knowing no master, for he was the young seigneur: fearing no God, for he himself was the idol of the whole canton. None of his own family had been to see him during the whole of those weary years, and the little brother, whose arrival he now welcomed with such glee, in consideration of sundry boxes of delicious bon-bons, with which the nurse, according to old French custom, returned laden, was the only individual, not only of his race, but also of his own rank and station, whom he had ever seen! The father was frequently absent with the army for whole years together, in the pursuit of fame; the mother was entirely absorbed in the duties of the court, and stirred not further from Paris

than Versailles. *She* was steady in pursuit of fortune. Did either of them succeed? The one died young, obscure in the annals of his house; the other died old and dependent; while the poor neglected child lived to make all Europe ring with his renown; and to found, by his own exertions, one of the most splendid fortunes of the Continent! Thus will Fortune mock at the weak endeavours of poor vain mortals, to work out their own destiny!

“Such was the tender care and nursing that befel Charles Maurice, the eldest son of the Comte de Talleyrand Perigord, and the circumstances of his childhood, so far from being remarkable or uncommon, may be taken as an example of the manner in which the nobles of that day fulfilled the first and most solemn duty of the whole existence of man—that of tending and fostering with care the offspring which God has been pleased to bestow. However, all evil, as well as good, must cease in time, and Providence has granted for our consolation that, as the one must have an end, so shall the other not endure for ever: and thus, about three years after the arrival in the village of the little Archaumbault, his brother Charles Maurice did at length behold the countenance of one of his own kith and kin. The youngest brother of his father, the Bailli de Talleyrand, capitaine des galères, and knight of Malta, had just returned from a cruise. He had been absent from his family for many years, and came with a heart overflowing with love towards his whole kindred: among whom stood first his brother and his young children.

“He was much grieved at the absence of the children, and immediately declared his intention of proceeding to the village where they had been placed, in order to embrace them before he set sail again, perhaps never to return. It was the depth of winter—the snow lay heavy on the ground—the roads were dangerous, but ‘*corbleu! morbleu! ventrebien!*’ what cared he for danger? and what danger should prevent him from visiting the *petits érotes*, and even from carrying the eldest off to serve with him on board the Saint Joseph, if he found him, as he

doubted not he should, full of fire and courage, and willing to assist in rebuilding the fortunes of his family by serving on the seas? He arrived at the village near nightfall, and alone, for the roads were so bad that he had been obliged to take horse; and, but one having been found in a serviceable condition, his servant had been obliged to stay at the town some miles distant.

"The entrance of the brave bailli into that solitary village must have caused quite a sensation; and I have heard that the whole scene has remained graven on the powerful memory of the prince, as though it had occurred but yesterday. He will sometimes recount it to his intimates, and laugh at the singularity of the circumstances; but that laugh, believe me, must be one of bitterness and scorn. No wonder that this man should have felt such strange contempt for his fellow man—no wonder that he should at times have acted as though he fancied that he alone existed in the world.

"Well, just at a turn of the road which led down into the village, the bailli bethought himself that he knew not the way to the house of the Mère Rigaut, the nurse to whom he had been directed; and he checked his steed, to gaze around and see if any one was in view who could assist him. While he thus paused, there came hobbling up the hill a pale, delicate-looking boy, with long ringlets of very fair hair, hanging loose over his shoulders, and an indescribable look of gentility, which the bailli perceived at once—at least he always said so afterwards. He carried a bird-trap in his hand, for he was just going out to seek for larks among the snow. The bailli called to him to come on faster: but, alas! as he drew near, he perceived that he was very lame, and that he bore a little crutch, which, however, he did not always use, but sometimes walking several steps without its aid, would flourish it before him as if in defiance, until a roughness in the road, or a loose stone, compelled him to place it again beneath his arm.

"'Hallo, *mon garçon*!' shouted the bailli, 'will you tell me the way to the house of the Mère Rigaut?'

"'That I will,' cried the boy, eyeing the bailli askance

and smiling slyly; ‘and, moreover, I will conduct you thither, if you will give me——’

“‘Ay, ay,’ said the bailli, ‘never fear; but make haste child—the wind blows cold and sharp, and you shall have no cause to complain of my want of generosity.’”

“‘Nay, nay,’ replied the boy, colouring, ‘I meant to have asked you but for a ride on your steed to Mother Rigaut’s door.’”

“And as the child spoke, he looked with envy at the rough post-horse, which, all unkempt and shaggy as he was, appeared far superior to the rude animals employed in plough or cart—the only ones ever seen in that distant village.

“‘Is that all?’ said the good-natured bailli, ‘then come along—mount—quick, my lad—there—jump up in the twinkling of an eye.’”

“The boy, lame as he was, sprang into the saddle, but the portly person of the bailli prevented him from taking a safe seat, so he leaned his little crutch upon the toe of the bailli’s boot, and grappled the horse’s mane with a firm grasp, almost standing upright: while the bailli, heedless of his perilous situation, trotted over the rough stones of the village pavement, the bells at the horse’s bridle jingling merrily, and the loud laugh—half fear, half delight—of the bold urchin echoing far and near. Of course the whole village was roused in an instant, and the astonishment was great at beholding Mother Rigaut’s ‘Charlot’ trotting down the street upon a strange gentleman’s steed, his long fair hair blown about by the wind, and his face shining and glowing amid the golden masses of silken curls which fell over it.

“The bailli stopped at Mother Rigaut’s door, but so little was he prepared to meet the truth, that he bade the boy, with whom he seemed mightily pleased, hold the horse while he entered the house to speak to the good woman, who was already standing on the threshold, all smiles and courtesies, to welcome the strange gentleman. The bailli entered and closed the door after him. What passed within none can tell. It must have been an extraordinary scene, for the sound of voices in high

dispute was heard for some minutes—a sound of sobbing and of wailing, and of loud expostulation; and presently the bailli was seen bursting from the cottage, and rushing upon the boy, and hugging and embracing him with transports of affection; then, all pale and trembling with emotion, he waved back with his riding-whip the advances of Mère Rigaut, who was pressing forward to clasp the child in her arms, and, seizing him in a sturdy grasp, he threw him on the saddle, and sprang up after him. But this time he allowed him room enough to ride at ease, and bade him sit in comfort, and then he placed his brawny arm around the boy's middle with solicitude, to keep him firm upon the saddle, and, putting spurs to the capering post-horse, he dashed out of the village without even asking news of any other child, or suffering the boy to take a last farewell of the Mère Rigaut, who followed him with shrieks and lamentations until he was lost to sight.

“It was not till they had arrived at the little town, distant about two leagues from the village wherein Charles Maurice de Talleyrand — Mother Rigaut's ‘Charlot’—had passed these first twelve years of his eventful life, and which he was destined to behold no more—that he was informed that the strange gentleman who had carried him off so abruptly, and in such a storm of indignation that he had not even stayed to see the little Archambaut, was his own uncle, the Bailli de Talleyrand, his father's brave and loving brother, whose generous heart had glowed with such indignation at sight of the unheeded state in which the poor child had been left, crippled for life through the awkwardness of the ignorant nurse, that, without hesitation, without permission, he had torn him from his misery, and, although greatly disappointed in the hope he had conceived of being able to take him on board the ship he commanded, in consequence of his infirmity, yet he would not suffer him to remain a moment longer abandoned to the ignorant kindness of which he had so long been a victim.

“As he was compelled to delay his return to Paris for some little time, he immediately wrote to the count, to

inform him of the circumstances in which he had found his nephew, Charles Maurice, and his intention of bringing him at once to Paris. The letter reached its destination some days before the worthy bailli, accompanied by his young charge, drove into the courtyard of the hotel where the Comte de Talleyrand resided. Here, to his great mortification, he found that the count was absent with the *armée de Flandre*; the countess was also absent on duty at the palace, it being her *semaine de service*, and not for worlds would she neglect her duty. She had, however, with an affectionate *prévoyance*, worthy of the greatest praise, appointed a gentleman to receive the boy from the hands of the bailli—a professor, who was to be his tutor at the College Louis le Grand, whither he was immediately to conduct his pupil, arrangements having already been made for his reception. The bailli sighed as he consigned the lad to the care of another stranger, and, taking an affectionate farewell, which was his last, immediately set off for Toulon, where he embarked, and was drowned at sea some few months afterwards.

“ Had the worthy bailli lived, the destiny of Charles Maurice would have been far different, and the fate of Europe have been changed. He would have found protection and support in his own family—in one of its members at least—and they would not have dared to wreak upon his head that deadly wrong, which changed the whole current of his existence, and compelled him to struggle and to toil for that which was by right his own. However, bad as matters were, they certainly might have been worse; for the gentleman to whose care Charles Maurice was confided, was at all events a kind and liberal person, and soon became greatly attached to his pupil. I have frequently seen him at the Hotel Talleyrand, even so lately as the year 1828. He was but a very few years older than the prince, and it was like a dream of other days to hear the ancient pupil and his more ancient tutor discourse for hours together of those early times, so long gone by, and of their friends and companions, all, with very few exceptions, long

since in the grave. I have often thought that it must have been to the society and counsels of this most excellent man that the prince chiefly owed the softness and humanity of his character, which even his enemies, amid all their absurd accusations, have never been able to deny.

“I have heard the prince, even very lately, speak of *ce cher Père Langlois*, as one of the most benevolent and pure-minded of men, and his friendship and affection for him knew no change, through all the vicissitudes of fortune, or the changes in politics. The prince, I believe, allowed him a very handsome income up to the day of his death: but this circumstance did not prevent him from sometimes indulging his quondam pupil with a few gentle remonstrances and *représentations*, whenever, by any misplaced word, or ill-timed reflection, he wounded the old professor's prejudices: and it was a most curious sight to witness the deference with which his observations would be received by the prince, who, so strong was the power of old association, bowed his mighty intellect, and submitted to the reprimands of the obscure and dependent professor. I have often been present at his visits, and always took most especial delight in witnessing the kindly feeling, the true affection, which existed between the pair. M. Langlois still wore, in 1828, the costume he had worn before the revolution, when, as professor of rhetoric at the college of Louis le Grand, he had undertaken the care and education of the poor neglected boy from the distant village in Perigord—a long-skirted black coat, without a collar, and buttoned up to the chin, black knee breeches and silk stockings, with large shoes and bright plated knee-buckles. His coiffure was in *ailes de pigeon*, with a long and goodly queue, well powdered: the large, flat snuff-box which he drew from the vasty deep of his ample pocket, and the brown chequered handkerchief which he used with a flourish and a loud report, brought back to memory at once the whole herd of *savans crasseux* of the eighteenth century.

“Well, to return to my tale. At the college, Charles

Maurice devoted himself most manfully to study. This is proved by the fact of his having obtained, the second year of his admission, the first prize of his class, although competition must have been hard with boys who had been in the college for many years, while he had been running wild and barefoot on the plains of Perigord. Three years passed away cheerily enough at the college. His life of study had, however, but little variety, for he was during that time one of the unfavoured few who were compelled by the arrangements of their parents to remain at the college during the short vacation. His mother came but seldom to visit him, and never came alone. She was mostly accompanied by an eminent surgeon of Paris, who examined the boy's leg, and bandaged it, and pulled it out, to force it to match in length with the other, and burnt and cauterized the offending nerve until the poor fellow learned to dread with extreme terror the summons to the *parloir*, and the announcement that *madame sa mere* was awaiting him there. I have often heard him tell of the agony of these visits, and of the disappointment which he experienced on seeing all his playmates depart to their various homes for the holidays, but I never heard him utter a single complaint or condemnation of his mother's conduct.

"It was at this time that his father died from the consequences of an old wound received in a skirmish some years before, and Charles Maurice was now the Comte de Talleyrand, and head of that branch of the family to which he belonged. Meanwhile, the younger son, Archambaut, had likewise returned from his most refined and tender nursing: but *he* had had the better chance; *his* limbs were sound and well developed, as God had made them. No dire accident, the consequence of foul neglect, had marred his shape or tarnished his comeliness. So, one fine day, and as a natural consequence, mark you, of this fortunate circumstance, when Charles Maurice, the *eldest* son, had finished his course of study at Louis le Grand, having passed through his classes with great *éclat*, there came a tall, sallow, black-

robed priest, and took him away from the midst of friends to the grim old *seminaire* of St. Sulpice, and it was there that he received the astounding intimation, from the lips of the superior himself, that, by the decision of a *conseil de famille*, from which there was no appeal, his birthright had been taken from him, and transferred to his younger brother.

“ ‘Why so?’ faltered the boy, unable to conceal his emotion.

“ ‘He is not a cripple,’ was the stern and cruel answer.

“ It must have been that hour—nay, that very instant—the echo of those heartless words—which made the Prince de Talleyrand what he is even to this very day. Who shall tell the bitter throes of that bold, strong-hearted youth, as he heard the unjust sentence? Was it defiance and despair, the gift of hell, or resignation, the blessed boon of Heaven, which caused him to suffer the coarse, black robe to be thrown at once above his college uniform, without a cry, without a murmur. None will ever be able to divine what his feelings were, for this one incident is always passed over by the prince. He never refers to it, even when in familiar conversation with his most loved intimates. It is certain, therefore, that the single hour of which I speak, bore with it a whole life of bitterness and agony.

“ It is evident, as usual with him throughout his whole life, that his decision, however, was taken on the instant. He murmured not—he sued not for commutation of the hateful sentence. He knew that it would be in vain. He even sought at once to conform, outwardly at least, to all the tedium of the endless rules and regulations by which the house was governed; but his whole character was changed—his very nature was warped and blasted. Whatever historians may write, and credulous readers choose to believe, he was *not* a ‘silent, solitary boy, loving to muse while his comrades played around him,’ as I have seen it written in a recent account of his life. Just the contrary. While at Louis le Grand, he was remarkable for his skill and dexterity

at all kinds of games requiring either fleetness of foot or strength of limb ; which fact was so extraordinary, from his infirmity, that the tradition has been preserved in the college. He was strong and hardy, in spite of his lameness. This he owed to the fresh air and free exercise he had enjoyed in his early childhood. His temper was mild and tractable, and, when attacked, his only weapon of defence was his tongue. His sharp, quick speech became, indeed, the terror of his comrades. Even then he had learned that the art of governing others consisted merely in self-command. What a pity that some of his juvenile *bon mots* have not been preserved ; they must have been delightful ; the very sap and freshness of his mental vigour.

“ At Louis le Grand he had been surrounded by the bold, ambitious spirits of the rising generation of that day, boys of all classes of society, all animated with the same eager desire for distinction, and, each in his degree, with the same thirst for glory. Even these children were awaking to the conviction that a new light was about to break upon the world, that the triumph of mind over matter was nigh at hand, and that the power of brute force must yield at length to the mightier power of intellect. A discontented spirit had gone forth, and even walked abroad into the very nurseries throughout the land. The days were past when the boys of noble blood sat down to table first and were served by the urchin *roturiers*, their fellow-students. At board, in class, or at play, the sons of the noble and the lowly, of the wealthy and the poor, were now jostled together. The high-born dunce, who was at college merely to while away the useless years between the epoch of actual childhood and that of his admission (still a child) into the army, no longer took precedence of the plebeian boy who was toiling and striving to acquire knowledge, even though it might have been the credit of the former which obtained the admission of the latter into the college.

“ In this struggle, the talents and quickness of young Talleyrand had shone conspicuously. His position on

his first entrance into the college had been most undefined and false. He had arrived from Perigord, wild and untutored, ignorant of the simplest social tradition of the *noblesse*; therefore had he no place or influence among the nobles; while, without wealth, or any of the dazzling appurtenances of his rank at command, he could scarcely be expected to have sway with the *roturiers*; and yet, before the first half year had passed away, he was found to be the prime mover and counsel of both factions by the power of his intellect alone. These are facts which still live in the memory of some few of the prince's old associates, and show how early that grasping mind, which was destined to govern those who governed the world itself, began to assert its dominion and to exercise its powers.

"I have dwelt thus lengthily upon the childhood of the Prince de Talleyrand, because, in the events by which it was marked, you may find both cause and excuse for many things that took place in after years. Such had been his life at Louis le Grand. Now, at the *Seminaire*, he was thrown at once among a set of creatures of a far different stamp from the bold and independent beings he had left. His new companions were mostly, like himself, sons of the poor *noblesse*: but, unlike himself, they were either the *younger* or the *bastard* sons. Not one of these had been deprived, as he had been, of his name and birthright, therefore none could have sympathy with all the bitterness that must have lain so heavy on his heart. Instead of the variety which gave such interest to his college life, and such constant food to his perceptive powers, he was surrounded in his new abode by beings all actuated by one single motive, and who had therefore been moulded by the same views into the same character. The sleepy dream of life at St. Sulpice centred wholly in ecclesiastical distinction and honour, and merely resolved itself into either riches or dignities, according to the temper of the dreamer. The ready wit, the lively perceptions of young Talleyrand, could not be appreciated in a community where hope was deadened, and imagination dulled, by the certainty

that robbed the Future of the dim veil with which it is hidden from the great mass of mankind, and which, according to the morals of the period, rendered the after years of the younger son of the poor noble, or the bastard child of the rich one, as easily to be defined, and as easy to unravel as a record of the past. So must have thought that little congregation of the *Seminaire* of St. Sulpice, who were gathered there in 1770, the year of the admission of Charles Maurice. But God had ordained it otherwise; and, could some few of the fortunes of those lads be told at this day, we should perhaps find as great diversity of adventure, and many a tale of interest as wild and fearful, as those which could be furnished by the youthful denizens of the Royal College of Louis le Grand at the same period.

“However, it does not appear that the young candidate for church preferment was guilty, for a single moment, of deception, with regard to those who had thus fashioned out his destiny. He wore no mask of hypocrisy at that time certainly, made no false pretence of fasting or of penance: but openly and freely shared in all the amusements which were within his reach, perhaps buoyed up with the presentiment that the time was drawing nigh when the cowed monk and the stoleed priest would be bound by no obligation to keep the vow which had been breathed from terror or necessity.

“It is pleasant to listen to his quiet and even mirifol tales of the life he led when staying at the *succursale* of the establishment, which was situated at Vaugirard, near which place (at Issy) the Duchess of Orleans, mother of our present King Louis Philippe, possessed a most splendid chateau. Here she used to assemble all the *élite* of the society of Paris, and on the boards of the little theatre belonging to the chateau were first produced some of the dramatic pieces which afterwards had the greatest vogue in the capital. To be present at these representations was an honour, of course, far beyond the pretensions of the poor seminaristes, whose ears were tantalized during the long summer nights by the rattling of carriage-wheels, and the hallooing of

livered attendants, as all the rank and beauty of Paris flew by the old gray convent, where the priestly inhabitants should have been slumbering in holy calm. But young Talleyrand slumbered not. He would remain gazing for hours through the narrow apertures of the jalousies, which the watchful eye of the *surveillant* caused always to be closed, and, with straining eyes and yearning heart, seek to picture to his fancy the faces and the forms of the fair occupants of the carriages which passed in rapid succession, until the desire to join the happy groups he beheld thus fleeting before him became irresistible, and he resolved *coûte que coûte* to gratify it. No sooner was the resolution formed than he hastened to its execution.

“Accordingly, one bright balmy night in August, he flung his black serge frock *aux orties*, and, without assistance and without a confidant (he never asked or took advice), he climbed the old crumbling wall of the garden, and jumped up behind one of the gay carriages which had so excited his envy. He will sometimes smile even now at the self-confidence with which he planted himself, all terrified and blushing, however, at the heels of the party who alighted at the *perron* of the château. He was fairly astonished at his own impudence, when he found himself comfortably seated in the parterre of the theatre, with an officer of the Gardes Françaises on one side, and a little masked and mincing *abbé petit-maitre* on the other; nor could he believe, as he raised his eyes and gazed around on that bright and brilliant company, that he was not in reality where he ought at that moment to have been, stretched on his lowly pallet, and dreaming of paradise.

“When the curtain rose and the play began, his admiration and delight became almost painful. The piece was Racine’s ‘Phèdre,’ and the famous Made-moiselle Contat, who performed the part of the wretched wife and mother, was in more senses than one the heroine of the evening. She had just been released from the prison of Fort l’Écluse, where she had been confined for some time, in consequence of having re-

fused to apologize to the Paris parterre, for treating its opinion and authority with contempt. Enthusiasm was at its height on her account. Party spirit had run so high, that duels had been fought between old friends, and *liaisons* of long standing been broken off, in consequence of differences of opinion with regard to her conduct in this matter. Madame de L——, a great patroness of the drama, had not hesitated at making herself the public talk, by taking to prison, in her open carriage in broad day, and in the face of all Paris, seated on her lap, with dishevelled hair and streaming eyes, the fair and injured Emilie! The new perfume, *larmes de Contat*, had become indispensable. Better go without a pocket-handkerchief at all than produce one which was not redolent of the complicated fragrance. There had been but a single incident to divert from tears and sobs in this adventure. The police-officer, who had been charged with the arrest of Mademoiselle Contat, had found her in the tragic mood, lofty and sullen. ‘Take all!’ she had exclaimed with theatrical grandeur: ‘you are welcome to take all—my liberty—my very life itself—but you cannot take my honour!’ ‘Fear not, mademoiselle,’ replied the man: ‘*ou il n’y a rien, he perd ses droits.*’

“Some had laughed at the witticism—others had felt it most deeply, as the unkindest cut of all. In short, her punishment and its cause had created a species of frenzy in the public mind, which had occasioned all minor troubles, whether of politics or finance, to be forgotten for a while. You trace the same effect produced by nothing else.” Our may judge, then, of the effect produced by the appearance of Mlle. Contat on the stage of this little *théâtre de bonne compagnie*, before an audience of whom she was the idol, and who had taken her imprisonment as the deepest personal offence to themselves. Every individual in the house rose and greeted her with transport. There was loud clapping of hands and stamping of feet; and some wept salt tears, and embraced their neighbours lovingly, so great was the common joy, so universal the gratification afforded by the release of the great Contat. Charles Maurice alone remained im-

passible amid all the clamour, for he knew not what it meant, until the Garde Française gave him a cuff, and bade him shout, or he would pink him, and the perfumed abbé fell upon his neck, and with sobs begged him, for Heaven's sake, to clap his hands, that he might be quite sure he was not seated next to a corpse, for nothing else could thus long have borne the presence of a beauty so divine without some demonstration of delight.

"It was when the clamour had ceased, and the play was allowed to proceed, that the real delight of young Talleyrand commenced. I have often heard him say, that never, during the lengthened years of his brilliant life, does he remember to have experienced an admiration so glowing, so intense, as on that memorable evening. During the whole of the performance, he had remained in a perfect trance, and, when it was concluded, he almost wept at the thought that he might possibly behold it no more. The play was followed by a supper, again followed by dancing, which doubtless lasted till the dawn, but our seminariste deemed it prudent to hasten homeward before matins, for fear of detection. This he accomplished on foot, and with celerity, and he was just comfortably settled in his bed when the odious clang of the chapel bell roused him ere he had yet fallen asleep. And it was long, indeed, before he again slept calmly as he had done before. That night's entrancement had opened to his sight visions of forbidden things, of which till then he had never dreamed, and the possibility of returning again with composure to the dull life of the seminaire was gone for ever! His passion for Mademoiselle Contat grew to be the one sole thought which occupied his mind, and he soon found means to indulge it. Night after night would he escape from his prison, and walk to Paris (after her return to the Théâtre Royal), in order to witness the least fragment of her acting. Sometimes, on the vigils of great festivals, when prayers had continued late at the chapel, or the superior had indulged his flock with an over-long story at the supper-table, the poor youth could not set out on his perilous journey until it was too late; and many a time has he had the mortifi-

cation of arriving at the theatre, after an expensive ride or a fatiguing walk from Vaugirard, just as the curtain was about to fall, and shut out the goddess from his sight. He often recalls those few short months of peril and excitement, as among the happiest of his life.

“ It was just about this time that he met with a romantic adventure, which he cannot even now relate without emotion, and which has all the character of the events which compose the most pure and healthy of the novels of the period. He was one day returning from the *Bibliothèque* of the Sorbonne to the *Seminaire Saint Sulpice*, laden with books and papers, when a violent storm of rain coming on, he was forced to seek shelter beneath a gateway in the *Rue du Pot de Fer*. The neighbourhood at that time was full of convents and ecclesiastical establishments — the Benedictines — the Carmelites — the *Frères Minimes* — the *Cordeliers* — all had houses or *succursales*, about the *Place Saint Sulpice*: so that you might have walked down whole streets of dark gloomy wall, without finding a single refuge from the rain — the convent doors being kept inhospitably closed, and the small space beneath the eaves being even more drenched than the middle of the street, from the dripping gutters which poured down upon the miserable wayfarer one continued sheet of water, certainly not so pure as that which fell straight from heaven. There was but a single space in the whole street where the passenger could hope for a dry footing, and young Talleyrand knew it well; a little archway leading to the back-door of a convent of Benedictines — the name of which I forget — whose principal entrance was in the *Rue de Vaugirard*.

“ It was a long, narrow passage, so dark that it was impossible to perceive any one concealed there, and might have served admirably as a place of ambush for any lurking thief or assassin, who might have chosen to harbour in its gloomy recess. Here the youth had stood some time watching the rain — which continued to fall in torrents — still laden with his books, yet not daring to open one of them, fearful that the rest might fall into the

mud—of course devoured with *ennui*, and stamping with impatience,—just, in fact, on the point of launching forth once more—if it were merely for the sake of changing his station for another more amusing,—when suddenly he became conscious of the presence of another person in the passage. He says that he was rather startled at first, but it did not belong either to his age or character to pass without investigation any circumstance which had arrested his attention: so clearing his throat with a successful effort, he called out manfully, ‘*Qui vive?*’

The exclamation was answered by a faint and stifled cry, issuing from the very furthest corner of the obscure passage. The young man ventured forward without hesitation, and discovered a dark and shapeless form huddled up in one corner of the threshold of the convent door, whose outline, so dark was the place, was invisible, even at arm’s length. He was conscious that the form was that of a female, and he stretched out his hand, and said kindly,—‘What fear you?—are you in trouble?—why are you hidden thus? Let me assist you, if you are in pain.’

“As he spoke these words, the figure slowly rose—a slight, frail, delicate form, that of a girl scarcely beyond the age of childhood, attired in the loose black dress of serge and large capuchon of the convent beneath the gateway of which they were standing. He took her gently by the hand, and led her forward to the light. The poor girl was so terrified, that she offered no resistance, and conducting her to the entrance of the passage, he gently withdrew the capuchon, with which she had covered her face, bidding her take comfort, for that he would do her no harm. The girl looked up into his countenance with an expression of anxiety and doubt, but the gentle kindness which she saw written there must have relieved her instantly, for she exclaimed, in a whisper, ‘Oh no—I *know* you will not betray me—but how *can* you assist me? I am lost for ever!’ and then she buried her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

“The youth remained gazing upon the girl in mingled admiration and surprise. Never, to this very hour, he

has often said, has he beheld a face of greater beauty than that which stood thus revealed to him in the dim light. It was a small and exquisitely delicate cast of countenance, with large wild eyes and arched eyebrows, and a calm, snow-white forehead, which a painter might have given to the Madonna standing at Saint Anne's knee. Her hair was hanging loose about her face, in dripping masses, from the rain through which she had passed, and the steam of the capuchon. Her small chiselled mouth was parted, and disclosed two rows of pearly teeth. But Talleyrand was most struck by the singular beauty of her complexion, which, although she evidently had been terrified, was not pale, but of the most vivid bloom, like the petals of the damask rose; while her eyes almost dazzled him, so bright and flashing was their lustre. By his patience and his kindly manner, he soon succeeded in winning the little maiden's confidence; and, although still in great agitation, she told him the story of her troubles, which was a singular one, and most affecting.

"She said that she was a novice of the convent of the Benedictine ladies, of the Rue de Vaugirard, and that the passage where they were standing formed part of the premises belonging to the building. She had been in that house ever since the age of four years—she was now fifteen—and during all that time she had never once been allowed to go beyond those walls. She had often yearned most intensely, she said, to see the world, which the other novices and the *pensionnaires* had described to her as being so very beautiful. She had sometimes begged very earnestly, too, to be permitted to accompany one of the lay sisters, who went sometimes into the country, to see a sick nun of the order, who was staying there for the recovery of her health; but she had been told that out of kindness she must be refused; for, as it was her destiny to pass her whole life in that old convent, it would be much better that she should behold no other place, and those who had more experience than herself could tell what regret and misery she would avoid by her ignorance of other scenes. She was to have renewed her vows of novitiate on the Thursday before, but

she had been so ill, that the ceremony had been deferred until the week following, and then she should enter into the last year of novitiate, and when that had passed away, she should take the black veil and be cloistered for the rest of her life. Her name, she added, was Constance de V., but she knew not of any friends or kindred which she had. A notary had always remitted to the abbess the sums necessary for the expenses of her board and education, and the dower money also was already lodged in the lady's hands, so that there was no hope—none—none—that she should ever realize her dream of beholding ever so small a portion of the world, of whose beauty she had heard so much. She said this with such a deep sigh, and such a yearning look towards the gloomy street where the rain still plashed in torrents, that the listener was moved almost to tears.

“‘But how came you here, mademoiselle?’ said he, ‘and in this state, too?’ pointing to her dress, which was wet through, and clung to her form in damp and streaming folds.

“‘Oh, I have not told you all,’ replied she, hesitatingly. ‘I know that I have done wrong, but my punishment is great as my offence:’ and she looked down the dark passage towards the door with a shudder of affright. ‘But thus it was. I had been ill in bed for more than a week, and had grown so weary of my little cell—and last night I could not sleep for thinking of all the brightness of the world I never was to see. I prayed to the Holy Virgin to take away these wicked thoughts from my mind, but she did not think fit to give me grace, for towards morning my desire to go abroad became even more intense; and so, when sister Marthe, who watches me, left me, still thinking that I was asleep, to go to matins, I rose from my bed and came down, to walk for a few moments beneath the cloisters of the outer court, in the hope that the air of the place, confined as it was, might help to cool the fever of the past night. I have long been forbidden to go into the garden; they say it is too cold and damp, and that my cough will be worse than ever if I stay beneath the trees. Well, I

turned round and round the court, listening to the chimes of Saint Sulpice, and thinking of what our Lady Abbess tells me I should never think of—the delight of lying in some cool green meadow, on the grass, beneath the overhanging branches of some old tree—when the tempter, who, as Sister Marthe has often told me, already half possesses my lost soul (alas! she *must* speak truth), led me this way—into the cloister which leads to yonder door. It was ajar—Mother Jeanne, the *femme de peine*, had just been cleaning it with broom and pail, and had opened it to sweep the rubbish into this dark passage. How she could have left it open thus I cannot tell—yes, Sister Marthe is right—it *must* have been the tempter's work! My heart beat violently at sight of that open door. I thought to have fled, but I yielded to temptation, and peeped through the long dark passage into the street beyond. Scarcely had I thus gazed for an instant, when I was seized with a desire so burning, so intense, to see the *Place*, which I had been told was at the end of this little street, that, without a moment's reflection, I rushed down the passage and was free. I meant to have merely cast one look upon the *Place*, and have returned immediately. I thought it might be possible that in this illness I might die, and it was very hard that I should leave a world, which they tell me God has made so full of beauty, without having beheld aught besides this dull old pile; so I stepped out into the street with more delight than I ought to have done, considering that I was doing what was wrong. I buried my head in my capuchon, and turned boldly down the street to the left; but I had not gone far before I perceived that I must have taken the wrong direction, for as I drew near to the end, I saw not the fine open square which I had been promised, but another street more dirty and more dull than the one I had just traversed. During the walk I did not meet a soul, or I think I should have fainted, for it was not till I thus stood for the first time alone and unaided that I remembered that my dress must at once betray me. I was resolved to return immediately, but, in the mean time, this

storm of rain came suddenly beating down with such intense fury that my dress was wet through in an instant. I ran with all the swiftness of which I was capable, to regain this dark passage; but judge of the agony of affright that I experienced on beholding the door which I had closed, and of which I had taken the key, fastened on the inside! Mother Jeanne must have perceived the absence of the key, and have bolted it within. Oh, I am lost! She has doubtless already been to tell our lady mother. They will all know 'tis I who am the guilty one, for everybody else will be at matins."

"As the poor girl concluded her story, she again burst into a paroxysm of grief. The young seminariste endeavoured to soothe her, and offered to go round to the great gate to try and obtain admittance there, but the trembling girl clung to him with such energy, that he could not tear himself away.

"'No, no; do not leave me now,' exclaimed she. 'I dare not be left thus alone. What shall I say when they come and find me here? They will come, I know, directly, and bear me back with hootings and with shame.'

"As she spoke, so great was her terror, that she shook like the aspen leaf, and her companion was obliged to support her by placing his arm gently round her waist, or she would have fallen. He then perceived, with great distress, that this violent trembling was the spasmodic shuddering of fever; and, as she placed her hand upon her bosom to still the convulsive throes, he beheld with yet greater horror that she wore nothing beneath her robe but the night dress which she had on when she left her bed. His heart was wrung at the thought of that delicate creature abroad thus, burnt with fever, and wet to the skin. It must be death to so fragile a being. Something, nowever, must be done. He durst not leave her. She was in that state of mind that she might have fallen senseless to the earth if she had been left alone; neither could he drag her with him the whole length of the street through the pouring rain, in order to arrive at the great gate of the convent.

The scandal would have been terrific, had they been seen together in the costume which they each wore. In the midst of this painful embarrassment, like the drowning man who clings to a straw, he went up to the door and turned the key. There was no impediment in the lock. He shook the door violently, then pushed it with all his might. Oh, God of mercy, it yields! It is *not* bolted, for daylight may be seen through the opening. Once more he brings all his strength to bear against the iron-studded door. The drops of sweat stand like beads upon his forehead, with the anxiety of the moment and the violence of his exertions. But he is presently rewarded by the grating noise caused by the removal of the obstacle within, and the faint shriek of joy which escaped the lips of the sweet Constance. She sees it all now! Mother Jeanne, in her rage for cleaning, had moved the old oaken bench from the archway of the cloister, and had placed it crosswise before the door, where it had resisted all her own puny efforts, as though it had been a wall of iron; and now her laugh of delight is so convulsive that it is more painful than were her tears and sobs. Meanwhile, young Talleyrand had pushed open a space sufficient for her passage into the cloister, and he assisted her to mount the bench and pass through. The hand which she gave him, and which but a little while before had startled him by its burning touch, was now as cold as marble. He imprinted one pure and holy kiss upon it before he closed the door for ever; and when he found that she withdrew it not, but thanked him, and blessed him fervently, and called him her deliverer, and said ‘*that he had saved her life,*’ he shut the door abruptly, for he could bear no more. He stood for a moment listening at the keyhole for the sound of her retreating step. It must have been very light, however, for he heard it not. He then walked slowly home to the *seminaire*, insensible now to either wind or rain.

“The books which the young student had brought from the Sorbonne were unperused that day. His mind was too much absorbed with the memory of that beau-

teous maiden, and with the undefined terror which he experienced for her sake. On the morrow he walked several times completely round the convent walls, but he saw not an evidence that the building was inhabited by a single human being. On the third day, he could not control his impatience, and bestowed a silver crown on the *commissionnaire* to go and ask, as if despatched by some great lady, whose name he was to forget, for news of the health of Mademoiselle Constance de V. The answer he brought back was that 'Mademoiselle Constance de V., in an attack of fever, being for a few moments unwatched, had risen from her bed and gone down into the cloisters, no doubt feeling grievously ill, and in search of assistance. It was supposed that she had wandered for some time in the quadrangle, for she was found lying drenched with wet upon the oaken bench, by the *porte de service* of the outer court. She was without sense or motion when taken up, and it was certain that she had already been dead for some time (this was the private opinion of the *tourière*), although the superior would insist on having the viaticum administered all the same. She had been buried that very morning at daybreak, and Mademoiselle de Breteuil, the favourite *pensionnaire* of the abbess, had got the promise of her cell to keep her birds in until the arrival of another *pensionnaire* to occupy it. The abbess was very angry with sister Marthe for having left the bedside of Mademoiselle de V., but could not punish her, it having been proved that she had only gone to matins.'

"Such had been the fate of that beautiful girl! The earth already covered her, before she had even seen the light. That stealthy walk along the dreary street, amid the cold and pelting rain, was all the experience she had carried to the grave, of the world she had longed so ardently to see; and, when the *seminariste* thought on the story of her life, and compared it with his own, he felt that he no longer had a right to complain. He had spent his childhood at least amid fresh air and free exercise wholesome to the body, and also amid the rude kindness and overwhelming affection wholesome to the

mind; while the poor child whose dying grasp he almost fancied that he could still feel, had never been allowed to roam beyond the gloomy precincts of her prison-house. With her innocence and loveliness, she had been suffered to grow like some rank weed which springs amid the crevice of the pavement stone of the foul jail-yard, and struggles but in vain to catch a gleam of sunshine or a breath of air, until, wearied with the effort, it sinks back dead into the crevice from which it sprung.

"This event made a great impression upon M. de Talleyrand, and sobered him for some time after its occurrence. He took to studying more diligently than hitherto, and shone among his competitors as brilliantly as he had already done at Louis le Grand. His speeches at the conferences which were held every month at Saint Sulpice, were judged to be masterpieces of reasoning and logic, and were thought worthy of being preserved among the records of the *Seminaire*—an immense honour for so young a man. He was now seventeen: it was judged advisable that he should go to finish his theological studies '*en Sorbonne*,' and it was during the short interval which elapsed between leaving the *seminaire* and entering the *Sorbonne*, that he first lodged at home. Note this when ye talk of the 'good old time':—the Prince de Talleyrand was seventeen years of age before he had slept a single night beneath his father's roof! Well might Jean Jacques thunder forth his maledictions upon the fine ladies, the '*marâtres sans entrailles*,' of his day!"

My friend here paused, to my great sorrow, with all the self-complacency of a professed lion exhibitor, to descant upon the beauty of the landscape as seen from the point at which we had arrived. Of course there were the well-known wonders familiar to all natural-beauty-hunters ever since the world began—the seeing into so many departments—the commanding a view of so many parishes, but which always worry me to death.

"What is that ruin?" said I, pointing to a pile of rubbish which lay close at hand.

“ Ah, that is no ruin,” replied C., laughing ; “ it is just the contrary, for it is an unfinished building. The history of that ‘ ruin ’ would amuse you, more than all the history of the person whose work it was. The prince calls it the ‘ *Folie Princesse*,’ and you shall have the story as we go home.”

CHAPTER VI.

MIRABEAU — THE PRINCESS T. -- THE MAYOR OF
VALENÇAY.

WE alighted from the carriage, and sat down on one of the blocks of stone which lay scattered about in all directions, bearing witness to the gigantic intentions of the projector, and also to the signal failure of the enterprise. C. looked around with sadness.

"The sight of this place," said he, "recals to mind so much both of pain and pleasure, so many associations for ever lost to Valençay, that I cannot behold it without a certain feeling of melancholy, which I little thought it would ever have inspired. And yet, in spite of all the jesting and merry sarcasm, the bon-mots and epigrams to which the first discovery of the little monument gave rise, it might serve to illustrate my favourite argument, when answering those who attack, by sweeping generalities, the whole life of the prince, and which I frame thus: 'No man can be so very worthless who has made such friendships as he has done, and won attachments so lasting and so true.'

"It is, in fact, one of the most extraordinary qualifications of this great man, and forms a parallel to what

is told of the fascinating influence of Napoleon. His powers of pleasing are so great, that he can with justice boast of never having failed to captivate, where he has been willing to do so, even when having to combat enmity and prejudice. Those who are accustomed to the bland and polished courtesy of his old age can readily imagine that in youth his influence must have been all-powerful. With this fascination of manner he must have also been possessed of the most aristocratic and handsome person, from the dignity of which, strange to say, the deformity of his foot never detracted. He was very fair, of most brilliant yet delicate complexion, with eyes of a soft dark blue, much covered by the lids, which contributed greatly to the air of quiet *recueillement*, misconstrued by many into an expression of cunning, which was habitual to him. His hair has always been considered one of his greatest attractions, being of the bright golden hue, so uncommon even in the north; and when he wore it loose over his shoulders, neither discoloured by powder nor disfigured by the torturing iron of the *peruquier*, it must have been most beautiful. Even to this very hour, you cannot fail to remark its rich luxuriance. It is not yet wholly white, but merely grey, and its original golden colour still shines bright amid the silver.

“I have seen several portraits of the prince, taken in his youth. There is one, a miniature, which, set in a bracelet, has met my eye every day for some years past, upon the arm of the fair Duchess de D., which never fails to arrest my attention, and to inspire me with the same interest, the same dreams and illusions of the past, as though, upon each occasion I behold it, it was for the first time. The likeness may be strongly traced even now. The features are moulded with a delicacy peculiar to the race of the Perigords, and the countenance is one which might certainly have been suspected of having greatly aided his varied talents and endowments, in the success for which he was so applauded and so envied. The costume in this picture is of about the year 1775, when Talleyrand was in the prime of youth, and when he had

not long emerged from St. Sulpice; and yet the portrait is rather that of a young man of fashion of the time than of a youth vowed to a life of penance and austerity. The hair, of which he was always proud, hangs loose and unshorn over his embroidered coat; no sign of monkish scissors or of priestly tonsure is there. There does not exist a picture of the prince either as Abbé de Perigord or as Bishop of Autun. So completely did he ever separate himself from the state of life into which he had been thrust by the force of circumstances, that he never would consent to have a palpable record of his profession brought in after times as a memorial against him. There is a beautiful portrait of Talleyrand when Prince de Benevent and Vice Grand Elector, painted by Gerard, and one of the best performances of that artist, now at Rochecotte, wherein the physiognomist might have *beau jeu*, for the countenance in this picture bears the most lively and *spirituel* expression that could possibly be represented by art. The painting by Scheffer, which has been engraved in London, and published by Colnaghi, is the best in existence as to the likeness, which is most striking. The artist has represented, in a manner almost sublime, the peculiar *mélange* of melancholy and *finesse* which the countenance of the prince always wears when in meditation,—an expression which sometimes inspires me with a feeling of the deepest sadness; it is the cheerfulness of the mind contending against physical infirmity and pain.

“You will readily believe that, with all the advantages both of mind and person which he possessed—with ambition of that quiet kind, which knows no obstacle in the attainment of its ends, and yet can wait with calm and bide its time—which is slow to decide, yet quick to move when the hour is arrived for action—with the courtly manners which must have been hereditary, joined to the calm dignity which he had acquired in the *Séminaire* de St. Sulpice, his first appearance in the world wherein he was destined to live and move, was hailed with peculiar triumph and satisfaction. The fame of his skill in argument, his subtlety in wrangling, had got beyond the walls of the *Séminaire*, long before

he himself had left it for the independence of the Sorbonne. The *conférences* which took place weekly in the old hall of the *Séminaire* had brought out his powers of persuasion, and his great quickness of imagination, which displayed itself admirably in pointed epigram and brilliant repartee.

“There are people living even now who can remember the effect which some of his controversial arguments produced at the time, among the audiences who enjoyed the privilege of a seat upon the old oaken benches of the *Séminaire*, on the days reserved for these public discussions. They must have been *chefs-d'œuvres*, full of point and pith, and generally sent the listeners away laughing with him, and sympathising with his adversary. These discourses were always read in public from a manuscript *cahier*, and were preserved in the *archives* of the *Séminaire*, until the revolution dispersed the whole of the property of the establishment, and they were lost. It is a great pity they were not preserved, as they must have contained much of the vivacity and energy of his youth, which were sadly wanting in his subsequent speeches: for Talleyrand has never possessed the qualifications necessary to the success of an orator; his delivery was lengthened, and his voice too deep and hollow to produce an effect upon a large assembly. Had it not been for these natural defects, all the vigour and fire of a Mirabeau would have been reckoned as nought, compared with the steady wit and cool philosophy of which Talleyrand was master.

“The world of fashion, ever on the look-out for novelty, stretched forth its arms to hug to its bosom the young abbé on his first appearance within its charmed ring. The reverend title with which he was invested, so far from being a preventive to his enjoyment of all the pleasures of the corrupt society of the period, rather served as an additional pretext for claiming his full share. The youthful Abbé de Périgord was courted and flattered by all parties: his sayings were repeated, his sentiments quoted upon all occasions. The world would now most willingly have spoiled him, and avenged the neglect of his relations, and the wrongs and insults

which had been heaped upon his childhood. But it was too late: he had already learned to despise that world to whose mean prejudices he had been made a sacrifice, and his heart and soul were already devoted to the cause of those whose struggles were beginning to make the old fabric of society quake and totter to its very foundations. It was while he was studying at the Sorbonne that the first shocks of the new era were beginning to be felt; but young Talleyrand, as yet, took **no** share in the struggle. His whole ambition for the moment was devoted to retrieving lost time in literature, and I have heard him say that the happiest days of his existence were spent alone, in the gloomy library of the Sorbonne, seated coiled up on the steps of the library ladder, while his cousin went abroad to pick up the news, and bring home reports of the progress of events. The practical knowledge of books which he acquired in this way was immense, and has served him all through life to season his conversation with quotation or parody.

“He was soon, however, torn from the enjoyment of this quiet mode of existence, by being named coadjutor to his uncle, the Archbishop of Rheims. From that time forward, books were laid aside, and he returned to them no more. The human heart became his only study, and one in which he soon became a perfect adept. The history of his life must prove, to every thinking mind, that at this very period his decision was thoroughly taken as to the line of conduct he would pursue, and the party in politics it was his intention to adopt, for he never gave himself up to the seductions of that world which sought him with such eagerness. He entered into its enjoyments, and profited by its indulgence: but there is no record of any strong friendship having been formed with any of its members. He allied himself at once to the new party, and among its leaders were his attachments chosen. Sièyes and Mirabeau were the beacon stars of his youth. The latter, in particular, was known to entertain the highest opinion of Talleyrand, and has left ample proof, in his letters and papers, that he considered him the only man capable of

succeeding him as leader of the party he had so triumphantly created.

"You will scarcely credit the assurance, that not even to this very hour can the prince speak without emotion of the 'giant Mirabeau.' I verily believe that this affection has never been supplanted in his bosom. It was not long since he was compelled to break off suddenly, in the midst of an anecdote which he was telling, wherein were mentioned the circumstances of Mirabeau's death. He became all at once silent, and no one dared request him to renew the thread of his story."

"Did you ever hear him allude to those circumstances on any other occasion?"

"Once only," replied C.; "we were alone together in his study in the Rue St. Florentin, one fine summer's evening. I had been reading to him some pages of Thiers's 'History of the Revolution,' and had just closed the book, for want of light, at the mention of Petion.

"That man," said the prince, "was the greatest scoundrel this country ever produced. Mirabeau, whose greatest defect in political conduct was the extraordinary facility with which he gave himself entirely up to the first person possessed of the slightest show of talent, who could take off his own hands any part of the labour, had grown *entiché* with Petion. For it was extraordinary that Mirabeau, whose mental vigour could, Atlas-like, have borne the world, was yet possessed of so much physical indolence that he was seldom known to carry out his own gigantic designs. Upon how many occasions, when his burning eloquence, his energy, had roused the angry lion, has he been known to laugh in pity, to see the *meute* whom his own fiery zeal had urged into hot pursuit, rush madly by, while he himself lay down to rest until some newer game was started. From the moment that such men as Petion, Brissot, and Condorcet, began to surround Mirabeau, and were admitted into his privacy, with Calanis, whom he had chosen as his medical attendant, I augured ill for the future fate of my friend. Already were Mirabeau's views and prin-

ciples grown too tame, too reasonable, for these infuriated demagogues, and they had several times received with ill temper his biting sarcasms at what he called their *exaltation republicaine*. I remember the effect produced upon one occasion at a private meeting of his friends, and the gloom and murmurs of rage with which the concluding words of a speech he had risen to make were received. ‘*Even supposing, my friends, that royalty were now to be abolished, it is not a republic that must be established—we are not yet ripe for this—it must be a commonwealth.*’ From that moment, such is my firm belief, his ruin was decided; but whether he really did meet his death by unfair means, or whether it was the consequence, as was proclaimed at the time, of excitement and fever of the blood, brought on by over-exertion and anxiety, none can tell to this hour. The circumstances of his death will certainly justify, both to his friends and to posterity, every suspicion of poison: while, on the other hand, there were no symptoms which could not be accounted for by the complaint under which it had from the first been proclaimed that he was sinking.’

“The prince paused for a moment, and I feared that he was about to fall into a reverie, as is sometimes the case when he has called up any touching souvenir of his early days; but presently he resumed:

“It was just such an evening as this, warm, glowing, early spring, when the fiery spirit of Mirabeau was passing away. The whole thing had been so sudden, so unlooked-for, that we could scarcely believe him in danger, before we learned that he was gone. It was the 2nd of April, and but two days before, he had come to fetch me, full of life and spirit, to dine in the Palais Royal with a party of friends, to talk over the proposition of a law of succession, which he had had for some time under consideration, and which it was his intention to present to the National Assembly. We walked together from my lodgings to the *restaurateur* Robert’s, where dinner had been ordered. I thought, in the conversation concerning his *projet de loi*, that Mirabeau was somewhat more

depressed than usual, and that his words came less freely and less flowing from his tongue. He certainly did complain of oppression and pain in his head, and, although the evening was far from sultry, he walked without his hat. I was particularly struck with the lassitude and weariness which he seemed to experience when we had arrived at our destination, and which could not be accounted for by our short slow walk from the Rue St. Honoré. He flung himself listlessly upon one of the benches beside the fountain in the middle of the garden of the Palais Royal, and said, sadly, that he was well pleased that our friends had not yet arrived at the rendezvous, for he was desirous of having a few moments' private conversation with me, not, for once, about public affairs, but concerning his own. "Is it not strange," said he, "that I, who am about to present to the Assembly a law, and to pronounce a speech, the result of long study, upon wills, should never, during my whole life, have given one single thought to the making of my own? Do you not think that it's growing high time to think of *every possibility*, with such strange proceedings going on around us—eh, my friend?"

"I was surprised at this sudden revolution in Mirabeau, for, of all men on earth, he had ever been one of the most thoughtless as to the future, caring little, indeed, even for the present, living *au jour le jour*, heeding not if the morrow never came: and I could only attribute his unwonted *accablement* to over exertion and fatigue. He had spoken much in the Assembly, and had, I well knew, passed many nights of late in the framing and preparation of other acts and decrees, to be brought forward before the close of the session.

"I tried to cheer him with soothing words, and told him it was likely that his day for thinking of this sort of thing was yet far off; that it was a mere fit of depression which caused him to dwell upon such gloomy possibilities; and I ventured to assure him that a good dinner and a glass of our friend Robert's best Chambertin would soon produce a good effect in calming his sudden misgivings about the future.

“ ‘ He shook his head mournfully : “ These are *banal* phrases, and you know it,” said he ; “ they are unworthy of you. I am neither a child nor a woman, and fear not to listen to the whispering voice of my own soul. The truth is, I *do* feel, at this moment, most singularly overcome by a sadness hitherto unknown—as if my task being, as it were, but just begun, needed no longer my exertions to finish it.” He laid his hand upon my knee, and looked in my face, wherein must have been expressed some anxiety, for I knew not what to think of the mood in which I beheld him, and added gently, “ Should anything happen to me before long, you will think of what I have been saying.”

“ ‘ His voice was so altered, and his countenance so drawn, that I became moved with sympathy, and began to fancy that he really felt very ill. but, with an *amour propre*, which, however misplaced on such an occasion, would still have been compatible with his character, I thought he might have been concealing his state until he could no longer bear up against it. I now listened, in mingled pity and interest, while he explained to me many of his intentions regarding the disposal of his property, in case he should die without a written testament. The education of his natural son, and the proper disposal of his papers, were the subjects upon which he displayed the most concern. He had already taken the precaution to have the greater part of his documents of importance conveyed to a trusty friend in Holland, and but few of those which remained in France were in his own house. He told me where these few were concealed, and bade me to take charge of them. “ In case,” he always would repeat, “ that anything *fâcheux* (that was his word) should befall him.”

“ ‘ He then spoke long and earnestly about his political career. In the single hour that we passed thus seated side by side, amid the hurry and bustle of the crowds who were hastening on all sides to the different *restaurants* beneath the galleries, did we converse together upon the splendid past, the exciting present, and the TERRIFIC FUTURE. We spoke in earnest whispers, pre-occupied and

abstracted from all around, as though we had been conspirators in the bosom of some forest solitude. The whole scene—the day—the hour, I can conjure up in colours fresh and vivid, as though they had vanished but one moment ago, and nothing else had been impressed on the canvass of my memory during all the long years since !”

“ I have seldom, very seldom indeed, beheld Prince Talleyrand give way to any demonstration of feeling, even when cause sufficient may have been found in some particular event going on around him. Perhaps, indeed, I may say that I never saw him betray anything like emotion, excepting on the occasion of this reminiscence of Mirabeau. But he had taught himself from his youth up to subdue speedily all outward display of his inward feeling, and he resumed, in his own subdued manner :

“ ‘ It will surprise you when I tell you that scarcely a day passes, even now, that I do not call to mind that scene : in fact, it is often forced upon me by the occurrences which are continually taking place before my eyes. It was a cunning device of the ancient seers to affirm that the gift of prophecy might sometimes fall on men about to die. It is not thus ; but the words of those we love are garnered up, when they who perhaps had spoken them many times before unheeded, can speak them no more, and we remember them as something new, although ’tis likely we may have heard them oft and oft before.

“ ‘ Mirabeau had doubtless many times, as upon this occasion, held forth to me his fears and doubts, his hopes and his despair, but I remember it not. I can find place in memory for but this one interview, and I have treasured up each word and phrase with a jealous vigilance, as though they had been uttered during the brief visit of a spirit. I had never been thoroughly inspired with the conviction of the Herculean powers of the man until this conversation. He seemed to toy with difficulties ; nothing was beyond his grasp ; nothing beyond the power of his will to bend. There is scarcely a single *prévision* of his which time has not realized, and often am I startled even now at events, which, seemingly the consequence of yes-

terday, had been foretold by him that evening, beside the fountain in the Palais Royal. He gave me many kind admonitions and warnings against some who were in our intimacy, and whom he deemed unworthy of friendship. He counselled me respecting the path that I should take in case this *quelque chose de fâcheux*, which seemed to haunt him so strangely, should take place, while affairs were in such a troubled state. In every case did I follow this advice, and in every case had I cause to rejoice that I had done so. Mirabeau was certainly inspired on that evening—he was sublime. I remember being struck with a saying of his, which I have since found of the greatest value. After having traced out for me a plan of conduct, in case public events should take the turn which he was anticipating, he concluded by saying, solemnly, “But above all things, my friend, slight not public opinion. Listen with open ears to the public clamour—for remember that the voice of the people is the VOICE OF GOD!”

“‘It was thus we conversed for more than an hour, during which I learned more of Mirabeau than I had done during the many years of strict friendship in which we had lived together. I should have regretted him far less, had this confidence never taken place, for I should less have learned to estimate his stupendous intellect, and the grandeur of his mighty heart. As you may suppose, I could have listened, entranced as I was, until midnight, and was angry when Condorcet, who was of our party, came running gaily up to our bench, and seated himself beside us, with a loud exclamation of surprise at the unusual gravity of our demeanour. Of course the spell was broken at once, and the conversation became general. Soon afterwards, our two other friends joined us, and we adjourned to Robert’s, at that time the first *restaurateur* in Paris, where we found dinner waiting.

“‘The dinner was gay enough. I alone, of all the company, was sad, and spoke but little. Mirabeau, at first absorbed and pre-occupied, gradually yielding to the influence which he never could resist, that of wine

and good fellowship, by degrees shook off the recollection of the colloquy we had had together so short a time before, and became as usual the light and life of the *réunion*. It would be a hopeless task to endeavour to recal one tithe of all the brilliant sayings, the startling epigrams, uttered by Mirabeau during this his last flash of existence. I had never beheld him so excited, so madly gay. He drank largely, and the wine seemed to inflame his blood until his excitement bordered on delirium. He raved—he sang—he spoke in loud harangues—he laughed fiercely at us all—at the court, at the people, at himself,—in short, at everything; and our companions hailed with loud shouts and applause every *bon mot* that he uttered. I alone could not share in this strange mirth, for I was yet shaken by the solemn foreboding, the dismal presentiment with which he had inspired me.

“At about four o'clock in the morning, the spirit, no longer to be controlled even by the gigantic physical strength which he possessed, gave way at last. He complained that his head felt heavy, and said that the daylight, which was just beginning to peep in from the fatigued his sight. Coffee was then proposed before we parted, and Mirabeau eagerly took a cup, which he himself poured out and sweetened. His hand trembled violently as he raised it to his lips, and he had scarcely replaced the cup upon the table when he fell forward with his head upon his hands, exclaiming, “My God! what strange new pain is this?”

“He rallied again, however, presently, and bade the waiter fetch a coach instantly, saying that he foresaw an attack of spasms in the chest, and that he knew his remedy, which was a hot bath and fumigations as quickly as possible. He requested me alone to accompany him, and from that moment until his death I never left his side. We drove to the public baths on the Boulevard, opposite to the street where Mirabeau then lived, the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Here his sufferings increased to such a frightful degree that I sent for Cabanis, who, however, did not arrive until the patient had left the bath, after having taken, against my most earnest

desire, a large bowl of milk and cocoa, of which he was extremely fond. Strange to say, he was considerably better after this, and left the bath for his own house, *on foot*. It is this circumstance, I have no doubt, which has given consistency to the belief that he had been *poisoned*, as it is averred that, had the mess of milk not been absorbed as *antidote*, Mirabeau must, in the state in which he was at the time, have died immediately on taking it. Such sweeping reasoning as this is of course beneath comment.

“‘It was with some difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to go to bed. He resisted to the last, declaring that the bright morning sun, which by this time was streaming in glory through his windows, would renovate him better than any physician’s advice. Soon after he had lain down, however, a change, from which he never rallied, came over him, and he continued to get worse until he died. It was a dreadful sight to behold his face, all swollen and bloated, and speckled with livid spots, and the white foam which gathered upon his lips as fast as his attendants could wipe it away. It certainly should not have been made a public show, which, before the end of the day, the death-bed of poor Mirabeau had become. Those foul suspicions of treachery and poison had their origin, I doubt not, in the extraordinary symptoms which his disease presented.

“‘Never from the first instant did Mirabeau deceive himself, or shrink from the decree. It has never been my lot to witness a death so dignified, so sublime. In the morning, through the day, surrounded by friends and admirers, all was well; but then came the silent watches of the night, when his whole heart was bared to me, his only comforter. Not once did he swerve, neither did he throw back one single look of regret over the road which he had for so many years been travelling. Quite the contrary;—he met the grim enemy with a courage and equanimity of temper, the gift of a philosophy of the highest order.

“‘If popularity could have satisfied the soul of Mirabeau, he surely must have died content. His house was

besieged, and, from the moment he was declared to be in danger, the very street became impassable from the crowd of messengers who thronged his door. High and low, rich and poor, felt alike an interest in the fate of the great man who was to protect them between monarchy and anarchy, which it is certain the mighty intellect of Mirabeau would have made an easy task.

“He lingered thus in pain and agony during the whole of this day and night, and died in my arms on the following morning at eight o’clock, having preserved his firmness of intellect until the very last moment. It is true (for there were some absurd stories afloat) that, about five minutes before he actually expired, he wrote on a piece of paper (for speech was already gone) these words: “*It is far easier to die than to sleep.*” The movement which he made to place the paper in my hand was his last. He never stirred afterwards. I have kept that precious scrap of writing through every change of fortune; and in the hope of keeping it to my dying day, have taken measures to have it preserved when I shall be no more. During his illness, he frequently reverted to the conversation which had passed between us on the bench at the Palais Royal. He told me that he then already *knew* that his fate was sealed, and dared me to maintain a conviction of the contrary. Throughout my whole life, I have ever resisted superstitious feeling, but there certainly does seem something strange and unaccountable in this gloomy foreboding of Mirabeau, that gives the lie direct to all one’s predetermined disbelief in the doctrine of “presentiments.”

“The generation of to-day, contrary to anticipation, has learnt to undervalue Mirabeau; but I think a reaction may come even in your time, because he was not a mere orator, whose fame must die when his powers of speech are gone, but he was also the greatest thinker of his age. How would the face of the country have been changed had he lived but a few months, nay, even a few weeks longer! This has been so strongly felt by all parties, that there were many who blindly *rejoiced* at his death, even among those who had known and loved him;

while those who had most cause to mourn, declared, in their terror, that he must have been poisoned.

“‘I have told you all the facts connected with his illness and his death, and with me you will cease to feel astonishment that the suspicion of such a crime should have gone abroad, when you consider the suddenness of his illness, its short duration, and the dreadful sufferings amid which his life was closed. These must have been terrific; for, about an hour before his death, he turned angrily round to Cabanis, and said, ‘A physician who is a true friend to the patient would not hesitate at giving a dose of opium strong enough to quiet such pain as this for ever.’ And yet, so powerful was the *morale* of the man, that even when thus writhing in agony, he could not refrain from laughing most heartily at some popular *lazzis* which were bandying between a screaming *ecaille* and the lackey of some person of quality, who were contending for the first hearing of the bulletin of the past night, and which reached his ear through the open window looking on the court-yard below.

“‘The public grief at the death of Mirabeau told more for his worth and greatness than whole volumes of written eulogium could now do. Perhaps there never before was an example of a *chef de parti* having been mourned as sincerely by the adverse party as by his own. The court was in consternation; the queen concealed not her despair, for she foresaw the dread consequence; the last barrier between the furious people and the angry *noblesse* was down, and the bitter tide would, ere long, rush in through the breach which the falling of this goodly corner-stone had made. I myself was so overcome by regret at the sudden loss which I had sustained, that I retired for some little time to Auteuil, scarcely daring to look at the future, or to speculate for an instant upon what was next to happen.’

“Such,” said C., “is the account given of the death of Mirabeau, by one who was with him from the moment of his first being seized with illness to that when the troublous scene closed for ever. The history contains,

perhaps, as fine a moral lesson as ever was preached from pulpit-desk or read in school.

“The sentiment which subsisted between Sièyes and the prince was of a different nature. There might have existed, in the origin, some little feeling of jealousy between them; it is certain they never were free from the *esprit de critique* indicative of rivalry, either secret or avowed. On no one subject did they differ more than on the subject of Mirabeau, Sièyes refusing him the mighty powers that the prince loved to allow him; and I have been witness to long and severe discussions on this one topic alone.

“The prince was fond of telling a story *à propos* of Sièyes, illustrative of the theory of great results from little causes. He was one day walking with him through the Tuileries, when, just opposite to the gate in the Place de la Concorde, a little beggar girl, leading an old woman on crutches, came up to solicit alms. Sièyes gave her a sou, which, in her hurry to seize, she let fall, and the coin rolled under the hoofs of the charger mounted by the *garde du corps* on duty at the gate. The child pressed forward to pick it up, but each time that she stooped, almost at the risk of her life, the soldier, apparently glad to divert the *ennui* of sentry by an event of this kind, spurred the animal to one side, and the wretched little girl, to avoid being crushed to death, was compelled to withdraw, to renew her endeavours again as soon as the beast stood still, but each time with as little success as before. The whole scene—the terror of the child—the overboiling wrath of the old cripple, and the insolent and cruel mirth of the *garde du corps*, presented altogether a most exciting spectacle, and, combined with the angry passions of the crowd, who were not slow to take the part of the child, formed a picture not easily forgotten.

“Sièyes, finding that the people were growing angry, thought it best to put an end to the scene at once; so, giving the girl a double sou, he bade her begone, which injunction she immediately obeyed, and the crowd forth-

with dispersed. But Sièyes remained thoughtful and pre-occupied during the whole evening; and, when he parted with his friend, he said, ‘I have been thinking over the occurrence we witnessed together this morning. Something must be done for the people. *When they have an army of their own*, they will not run the risk of being insulted by hired mercenaries.’

“This was the very first idea which had ever entered human brain respecting the formation of a national guard. Once started, the idea found favour with all the disaffected. Sièyes himself planned and invented the *projet*, and, by dint of perseverance, got it accepted some long time afterwards. Little did the proud *Garde Nationale*, when they marched to the frontier—when they dictated laws to the country—when they barricaded Paris—dream that they owed their existence and creation to a halfpenny which a starving beggar wench found it hard to pick out of the gutter!

“*Apropos* of this story, there is an addition to it which the prince always gives us, and which you, who are come of a superstitious race, and plead guilty to the accusation of superstition yourself, will perhaps like to hear. M. de Talleyrand had taken peculiar notice of the soldier who bestrode the charger. He was a remarkably handsome youth, quite an exquisite, an *incroyable*, with coal-black moustaches and *royale*, and snow-white powdered hair,—a combination that certainly gives a piquant expression to the countenance, which all the fine chestnut hair or raven locks in the world, however redundant, however silky, can never impart. Besides, it suited so well with the costume of the period, that it would seem as if the one had been invented on purpose to show off the other. However, to my story. You may well imagine that the old cripple had not left the spot, however well satisfied she might be with the unexpected generosity of Sièyes, without loading the air with curses upon the head of the young *garde du corps*. She was a filthy hag, blear-eyed, and lame; and it was fearful to hear her, as she tossed her rags aloft upon the wind, utter such awful maledictions, in a screaming, discordant voice, that the

blood ran cold to listen. The soldier sat in calm defiance on his saddle, in the prettiest attitude imaginable. Stiff, starched, on duty, without moving a muscle, with his hat on one side, and his hand bent, and resting on his thigh, he looked straight at the woman, for fear of being suspected of wishing to shun her gaze; but he betrayed no heed of her words, save by a slight smile, which curled his lip, whereon rested a green leaf (as was the fashion among the bucks of that day), to keep it moist, and prevent its cracking by exposure to the sun.

“The old witch, enraged at finding that her words produced no greater effect, at length raised her crutch in the young man’s face, and shrieked a fearful malison. ‘Proud as you are, jackanapes, I shall live to see your soul in h—, and your body devoured by the dogs!’ With this she hobbled away, and we also turned aside in disgust, while the young man remained immovable and unconcerned, as though the words had not been addressed to him at all.

“The event I have been relating took place before the breaking out of the revolution. Now rejoice, and listen, thou northern believer in prophecy and witches. The very day after the return of the king and queen from Versailles, when traversing the Place Louis Quinze, M. de Talleyrand was attracted by a crowd gathered round one of the deep fossés, by which the place is intersected, and, on going up, there beheld the body of the unhappy *garde du corps*, lying all mangled and bloody at the bottom. Some men belonging to the police were endeavouring to catch at the corpse with hooks, in order to drag it to the surface; and, as they did so, it was discovered that a great part of the throat and breast had been gnawed away by starving dogs during the night. The poor lad had been doubtless murdered by some unknown hand during the bustle and confusion of the previous day, and thrown into this convenient place, and thus was the prophecy fulfilled.”

C. rose as he finished his story, and gazing around, said, laughingly, “See you now the misfortune of having to do with professed story-tellers? We began with the

history of this unfinished hunting seat, and have paused at the beginning of the French Revolution !”

“I need not lose by the delay, however,” said I; “you can tell me the tale of this ruin as we go home.”

“I remember,” replied C., “the sight of the building brought to mind the subject, which has formed a study of mine ever since I have been with the prince—his powerful and varied influence with all who approach him—and it was thus that I was led into this long digression. This building, which you now see so ruined and degraded, was intended to have been one of the most remarkable objects of the whole country round. It was planned and designed by the late Princess T——, as a surprise and *galanterie* for the prince, who had once, when taking a drive in her company, expressed an opinion that this would be a good site for a *maison de plaisance*. The princess said nothing in reply, but immediately on her return to the château, despatched a courier with letters to Chateauroux, containing orders for architects, surveyors, masons, and all the *attirail* of building, to be sent immediately to the spot; and, in less time than you can well imagine, the foundations of a goodly-sized building, with courts and *dépendances*, befitting the residence of a repose-seeking prince, were erected. Expense was to be considered nought—despatch everything—workmen were to be employed night and day until the edifice was completed. All this was, moreover, to be kept a profound secret until the building was quite ready to inhabit, when the princess proposed leading the company at the château through the wood to the spot, and then, enjoying their surprise, to request their attendance at a ball and collation of her own providing in the *maison de plaisance*, ‘which she had built as a present to the Prince de Talleyrand.’

“Meanwhile the prince, being again abroad with the princess on another fine day—in quite an opposite direction, almost drove her mad, by suddenly stopping to admire another view. ‘Of all places in the wood, this is the exact spot I should choose, were I consulted, to erect a *maison de plaisance*!’ said he.

“The princess was glad to hear this in time, although it gave her great trouble and caused immense outlay; however, she consoled herself with the hope that she should succeed at last in delighting the prince. She immediately gave orders for the transport of the workmen and materials to this new ‘Folie,’ and once more did the hammer and saw resound through the silent wood, and again did the grinding cart-wheels disturb another solitude. Scarcely, however, were the foundations of this second pavilion laid, when the prince again disconcerted all the plans of the poor princess, by exclaiming one day after dinner, ‘I drove this morning by the river side—what a beautiful *point-de-vue* there is down by the Willows; most assuredly if I ever built a *maison de plaisance*, that is the spot I should choose.’

“This was too much. The princess was completely overcome. She burst into tears, and left the table, much to the astonishment of the company. Nothing could persuade her that the allusion was not wilful on the part of the prince, and she was in actual despair of being able to please him. She regretted not the large sums which she had expended, and which had already grown serious, but only the misfortune under which she had laboured in not having chosen the right spot. The prince laughed heartily at the joke. and, during the whole of that season, his favourite promenade was to the hill upon which the magnificent, unfinished Folie Princesse remains a memento of the devotion of her highness, and of her inability to give satisfaction.

“This lady was one of the ‘*illustrations*’ of Valençay, and her death has caused an immense vacuum in our circle. Both by birth and marriage allied to many of the sovereign families of Europe—with a colossal fortune—with the tradition and remains of great beauty—she gave up even her own identity, to become a mere part and parcel of the *apanage* of the Prince de Talleyrand, content to live in his shadow, and to borrow her importance from him alone. There was a great deal that was touching, from its total disinterestedness, amid all the absurdity of this romantic devotion.

"The prince was often annoyed by the extent to which she carried this *culte*, but, *en homme d'esprit*, he generally succeeded in throwing back the ridicule which he felt was likely to attach to him, upon herself, and scrupled not to enliven the dullness of the evening circle by drawing her out; while she, poor soul, too happy to occupy his attention even for an instant, consented willingly to become his butt; and thus it often happened that the Princess T——, daughter, widow, and sister of princes and heroes, was employed to divert the *ennui* of many a little *gentilhomme campagnard*, or *hobereau de province*, who might, as matter of form and neighbourly feeling, chance to be invited to dine at the château. But, as I tell you, although perfectly aware of this—for she was by no means wanting in penetration—she cared not, so that '*ce cher prince*' found amusement; indeed, I think she even felt honoured by the preference accorded to her above the other guests.

"However, she failed not upon other occasions to avenge herself upon these witnesses of her discomfiture, and in her turn crushed without pity every one around her who was not the 'prince,' or allied in some way with him, or one whom he delighted to honour. With others never was there a more *roque et fier* *Allemande*, and in spite of her good nature and generosity, she had more enemies than many who sought less applause.

"She was the most eccentric person I ever met with: the last of a race of which it will be impossible, from the change in human ideas, ever to behold another specimen. In her youth she had been most beautiful, and still retained, saving the loss of an eye, traces of loveliness even in advanced age. She could not be called either clever or witty, but was the cause of such interminable wit in others, of such endless good sayings on the part of the prince, that Valençay, to those who were accustomed to her society, seemed dull *a priori* when she was not there. She had the greatest fund of originality and natural vivacity that could be possessed by any human being. Her ideas could not be made, by any force of reasoning or persuasion, to follow the tide

of improvement of the times, and she could never be taught to believe that the revolution had wrought any change in the relative positions of the aristocracy and the people, but continued, to the latest period of her life, to treat all plebeians and *roturiers* as though they had still been serfs and vassals, subject at her will and pleasure to *détresse* and *corvée*. She was an invaluable specimen of the old insolent noblesse ; and after a day spent in her company, you might retire to rest, no longer wondering at the horrors of the great revolution, nor yet at the hatred by which they had been instigated.

“ On one occasion, she had nearly set the whole province in an uproar by an unseasonable display of what the prince was wont to call her *impertinence Régence*. A large party had been invited to dinner at the château, a party in honour of the arrival of some high and illustrious visitor at Valençay ; I think there were even scions of royalty among the guests. In short, it was one of the gaudy days of the castle, when the flaming yellow liveries, and the antique silver, and the royal gifts, were all displayed. Of course the *préfet* of the department, the *maire* of Valençay, the *curé*, and, in short, all the authorities of the place, had been invited, and with true provincial punctuality had arrived at the exact hour named in the invitation, which, as usual in modern times, was long before the princely host expected to receive his guests ; and, when they were ushered into the drawing-room, they found that none of the family had as yet appeared, and that they would be consequently compelled to amuse themselves as they best could until the ringing of the bell, which would gather together the stray members of the household.

“ In a short time, however, the great doors of the drawing-room were thrown back with a loud *fracas*, and in sailed, in all the majesty of stiffened silks and fluttering plumes, her highness the Princess T—. The troubled provincials immediately with one accord turned from the chimney, where they had been talking in mysterious murmurs concerning the mighty individuals whom they were to meet at dinner, and moved in a body

with sundry low bows, and a great display of gymnastic prostrations, towards the fair princess. The latter stood for a moment, and gazed as they advanced, then turning suddenly round to the grinning domestic, who had remained standing at the door:

“ ‘Fool!’ exclaimed she, indignantly, ‘did I not bid you ascertain if anybody had arrived, before I troubled myself to come down to the *salon*?’ ”

“ ‘Yes, *princesse*, and I came myself to see,’ answered the servant, looking rather puzzled and embarrassed, first at his mistress, then at the guests, who stood wondering where the questioning would lead to, ‘and when I found these gentlemen here, I——’ ”

“ ‘Idiot!’ interrupted the princess, ‘not to know your business better; remember that such as these are not anybody, but NOBODY.’ ”

“ With these words she tossed out of the room, pointing with her fan over her shoulder at the poor stupefied provincials, whose rage and mortification defy description. They were not slow to spread the tale of her insolence and haughtiness throughout the country round, and the circumstance caused the princess to be viewed with no very friendly eye, as you may well imagine. ”

“ Soon after this occurrence, having occasion to visit Paris, she left Valençay in her carriage, drawn by four horses, and driven by the postmaster himself. Her highness was always in a most tremendous hurry, and loved to be driven at a tremendous rate. This the postmaster knew well, as he had been in the habit of driving her for years. He accordingly took much pains upon the occasion to which I refer, to go as slowly as possible, in order to vex and worry the princess, whose temper was not long in breaking forth, and she presently began by calling after the driver in the most imperious manner to hasten his speed. This injunction not being attended to with as much alacrity as she could have wished, she began to pour forth volleys of abuse, seasoned with sundry fierce sounding exclamations and oaths in the

Polish language, to which, upon great occasions like the present, she was wont to give utterance, (according to her own account, quite unconsciously.) The man bore this for some little time, perhaps rather more diverted than otherwise at the thought of the trick he was playing one of those ‘infernal aristocrats;’ until at length, no longer able to contain her indignation, the princess seized the footstool which was at the bottom of the carriage, and hurled it at the postillion, with such unsteady aim however, that the missile flew far above his head. ‘Dolt!’ shouted she, standing upright in the carriage, and gesticulating fiercely, ‘do you imagine you are carrying a load of manure to market?’ ‘*Ma foi!*’ exclaimed the postmaster, coolly dismounting from the saddle, ‘many’s the load of manure I’ve taken which has fetched at market twenty times more than you would have done there.’ With these words, he deliberately set about unharnessing the horses from the carriage, and bidding the other postillion do likewise, he turned back towards Valençay, leaving the carriage standing alone in the midst of the long solitary road, with not a human habitation in sight, and night coming on. The shrieks and menaces of the lady were all in vain; the man having paused to light his pipe, with the greatest *sang froid*, jogged by the carriage window, cracking his whip with fiendish enjoyment of her terror, until he got to the very bottom of the hill, and was lost sight of. The princess could never be prevailed upon to tell the sequel of the story, nor of the means by which she had been extricated from her most mortifying situation; and, as neither of her tall valets nor her talkative maids could ever be induced to betray the secret, it was thought that she had compelled them all four to turn out into the road and drag the carriage to some wayside ale-house, where she could rest till horses arrived. I know not if this was the case, but she certainly was quite capable of doing it.

“A goodly volume might be filled with her *naïvetés* and unconscious witticisms; for it was her total indifference

to the good things that she uttered, and her contempt for the effect which they produced, that constituted their greatest charm.

"I shall never forget the effect produced in the *salon* one evening by an event which occurred a short time before the prince's embassy to London, and which served to *égayer* the society for some time. Among other ancient traditions of the courtly life of former days which she loved to keep up, and one, too, which completely coincided with her tastes and habits, was the custom of the *petit billet*, a *usâge* which has been completely lost since the time of the great revolution, and which might be taken as a specimen of the time-killing, fiddle-faddle occupations in which the *noblesse* of that day passed their lives.

"This custom of the *petit billet* still exists in many of the old families wherein courtesy and etiquette are still maintained, at least among the elder members. It consisted in writing a short note of inquiry every morning to the person beloved, who answered it likewise in writing, for no verbal message would have been received. Of course the contents of the note could not be much varied. There could be nothing to say but day after day the same 'good morrow,' with inquiries how the night had been passed, and other questions of small interest, which the present generation, who live deep and fast, expending their sentiments and energies on greater things, have no time to make. I myself know a married couple of the old school who, like all married couples of the old (French) school, have been separated *de corps et de biens* for the last forty years, and who have never missed once during the whole of that time sending the *petit billet de matin*. I was once thoughtless enough to rally the lady upon this constancy, when she replied, angrily, 'Monsieur, although Monsieur le Compte and myself may not choose to live together, yet our mutual position, and the rank we both hold in society, prevent our enjoying the privilege of dispensing with the common customs and formalities of the circles in which we

have both been bred. In renouncing all idea of love for each other, we have not renounced good breeding.'

"Well, the princess, who was, as I tell you, *à cheval* upon etiquette with regard to the prince, never appeared in the morning without having been preceded by her *petit billet*, although the prince never thought fit to encourage her absurdity by sending a written answer. One evening, she had retired earlier than usual, and, shortly after, just as the company was breaking up, a note was handed to the prince by the princess's valet. We were all rather alarmed at first, fearing that she might have been seized with illness; but presently the billet was handed about amid roars of laughter; there was nought to fear; it ran thus: 'Cher prince. How are you this morning? I myself am far from well, having passed a wretched night, although when I *did* sleep, I dreamed of you, which was some little consolation amid all my agitation and restlessness.' The note bore the morrow's date, and had been given by the careless servant some twelve or fourteen hours too soon! Upon inquiry, it proved to be the habit of the princess to write these little billets over night, to avoid being disturbed in the morning; they were laid on her toilet table, whence the valet had taken the one in question, without inquiry and without reflection. Of course the prince was merciless; the Princess de T—— furnished the standing joke of the season, and was never left in peace until some new absurdity caused the story of her 'precautionary measure' to fade in the background."

CHAPTER VII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY LIFE, BY PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

"It is a most extraordinary circumstance," said I to C., one evening, as we sat together in the little turret-chamber, "that no well-authenticated life of the prince has ever been written. It would, I have no doubt, attract more attention than any work of the kind which has appeared for years. Why do you not attempt the task? You are better qualified, from the length of time you have been in his intimacy, from your very admiration of the man, to undertake the task, than any one else now living."

"You flatter me," said C., smiling; "the undertaking would be far beyond my power, or, indeed, it would be within the limit of the capabilities but of one man alone. The sole biographer of Prince Talleyrand must be Prince Talleyrand himself. Any clever, well-informed historian might give the facts of the prince's life, but who but himself could render to posterity a satisfactory account of the *motives* which had led to action, the *consequences* which have accrued from the various decisions which he has taken, and which, in most

instances, as he himself is always declaring, have been totally in opposition to the results foreseen? Such a biography of himself as *he* could write, would be a literary monument as lasting as the world itself. It would be the *secret* history of every government of Europe for the last sixty years—the private memoirs of every distinguished individual would have to be incorporated into such a biography, where, of necessity, every distinguished individual in Europe *must* be made to play a part. I know that M. de Talleyrand has been for years past compiling his diplomatic memoirs, but, by a singular infatuation, he has proclaimed his intention of not permitting their publication to the world until forty years after his death. This determination *à la* Voltaire, is singularly in accordance with the character of the man, who is always repeating so playfully, ‘No one can doubt my powers of waiting.’

“Some of those most interested in the matter, to whom he has communicated his malicious decision, rail loudly against such a determination; whilst others, with perhaps equally good reason, as loudly applaud; so that it is evident to the unconcerned looker-on, that whatever may be his secret motive for thus deciding, it is already justified by the different passions which it has excited. He has in this, as in everything else, displayed the depth of his reflective powers, and refused to sacrifice high interests and grave results to a paltry feeling of *amour propre*. He has reflected that, in those intervening years, all the loud baying pack of fierce detractors of his fame will have yelped forth their calumnies—the smaller fry will also have all expended their puny efforts, and then *he* will come and call upon posterity to judge between him and them. Doubt it not—posterity will answer the appeal. The next generation will be more just than his own. The fierce passions, the deadly struggles, the political hatreds, amid which his own existence has been passed, will all have died away, and men will sit in calm, unbiassed judgment on the various actions of his life, and will be the better able to pronounce their verdict when they have beheld the conse-

quences of his counsels; when they shall be enabled to compare his adoration of his country, his indifference to its *rulers*, with the slavish self-interest, the narrow-minded, mercenary views of those with whom he had so often to contend.

“ Believe me, a man must entertain a tolerably good opinion of his own discrimination, and have the organ of self-esteem developed in no mean degree, who could sit down coolly with a pretension of giving to the world a correct, nay, even a *lucid* life of Prince Talleyrand. He has out-lived the greater portion of the comrades of his youth, of whom even then he lived so far in advance, that it was said of him, he had ‘comrades and colleagues, but no contemporaries.’ Long before middle age, he had learned that, in public life, the one thing needful is discretion; while he it was who first published to mankind the discovery he had made, that ‘speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts.’ Therefore, it is not probable that there exists a soul who could ever have penetrated sufficiently into the wily statesman’s confidence ever to gain enough knowledge of his aims and views, to *account* for the different changes in his principles, with which he has been so taunted by all parties. There is not a single epoch of his life which is not, besides, so bound up with anecdotes and incidents of the ‘times in which he lived,’ that often the most simple recital of facts, as connected with any adventure in which he may have been engaged, might give deep offence in other quarters, and cause recrimination, and perhaps even, in some cases, litigation, on the part of other high personages, whose names would have to be brought forward.

“ No man was ever made the object of so much unjust vituperation as the Prince de Talleyrand, of calumnies which have been accepted by the credulous with as much good faith as proofs of holy writ; while not one single *proof* of perfidy or baseness has ever been brought against him—nothing but supposition, for the most part ill-sustained, and sometimes even completely belied by his subsequent conduct. Notwithstanding the

apparent freedom with which he admitted all his *entourage* to his intimates, how little is really known of his private life! Notwithstanding the greediness with which the public have always sucked in any stray anecdote, any fugitive *bon mot*, or axiom of this great man's, yet how strangely ignorant do they still remain of his real character—how blind to the real grandeur of soul, which he ever displayed amid the most trying circumstances—where any other than he would have clutched at the shadow, he let both the empty substance and the emptier shadow pass, while he calmly paused for that which was to follow. The truth is this—the *mind* is made the judge of the public character; the *heart* alone can understand the value of the private one.

“I have often myself seen him smile at the idea of any one attempting his biography, and, whenever by chance he found himself compelled to receive at Valençay any of the petty journalists, the stray collectors of *bon mots* and epigrams for the *salons* of Paris, I have beheld him take a malicious pleasure in mystifying their credulity by relations of the most extravagant adventures connected with himself, or with the great public men with whom he had come in contact. One of his keenest enjoyments consists in making me read, while he is at his toilet, these same anecdotes as they appear in the peculiar journal for which the poor *gobe-mouche* has been catering. As I have said before, there is so much that is real, and so much that is false, mixed up with everything connected with the prince, that the historian who would seek to be veracious, finds himself completely baffled. On the other hand, the world of anecdote is our own. He is no niggard, in sooth, of his rich store of souvenirs, and loves to dispense them to his intimates with a bounteous hand. The mention of an obscure name, the raising of the simplest doubt, will draw forth, when he is in the vein, such ample fund of amusement, that many a thick, closely-printed volume might have been compiled from this source alone.

“I remember that, one evening, by some unaccountable circumstance which I now forget, we were fated to

spend the hours from dinner till bed-time alone. The ladies of the family had gone to do honour to the bridal of a rich vassal in the neighbourhood of the château, and had most especially recommended the prince to retire early, as he was labouring under severe cold on the chest. You will scarcely believe me when I tell you that we remained up together until daylight—so absorbed was he in the remembrance of events of years gone by, and of which some simple observation on my part had touched, as it were, the galvanic train, and roused the reminiscences which had slumbered perhaps since his youth, while I thought not of rest or sleep so long as he talked on. I could have listened until doomsday. One of the subjects on which he spoke that evening was the very one upon which I have just been entertaining you: that of his memoirs. There had been an advertisement in one of the Paris papers that morning announcing sketches of ‘the Arch-Diplomatist, from Original Documents.’

“ ‘This is about the fortieth attempt of the kind within the last dozen years,’ said he, in answer to my information of the circumstance, ‘and, what is more astonishing is the fact, as I am told, of their having all met with more or less success. The public love to be duped, and seek with eagerness every occasion to be deceived. It is the charlatans alone whose numbers fail, dupes are never wanting.’

“ Had I not been already convinced of the utter impossibility which must ever exist of any individual of our day being able to do justice to the ‘Life of Prince Talleyrand,’ that evening’s conversation, in the old Perrault-looking drawing-room of Valençay, would have amply proved it. A volume might be filled with the anecdotes he told me merely relating to the first years of his youth—just at his *début* in the fashionable world, before the revolution. He began with the *Séminaire*, recounting with peculiar delight the history of his intimate associates there—his prodigious memory seeming to grasp the most trifling details relating to each with as much vigour and freshness as though he were speaking of yes-

terday. Many were the curious customs, the picturesque observances, of the old place, the very tradition of which has since been lost, obliterated, and trodden under foot in the mire of the revolution, and of which he alone, in the whole world, was left the chronicler.

“‘It cannot be denied,’ said he, in speaking of this establishment, ‘that vice and infidelity had crept in there as elsewhere, as how could it be otherwise, when all the talent and brilliancy which have dazzled youth in all ages were on the side of doubt and irreligion? And yet there were still some bright examples, some few specimens of a higher order of beings, gathered among us, whose light shone out yet brighter from amid the utter darkness by which they were surrounded. The histories of some of those young men would better serve as themes for novel or romance than for book of saintly lore; for the revolution dispersed them right and left, and sent them forth to the world, some to battle with their fierce, pent-up passions, others to struggle with their timid fears.

“‘Not all the romance that ever was written could equal in interest the plain narration of some of the adventures which, in after life, befel my fellow-students. Some perished beneath the revolutionary axe, voluntary martyrs—others were found in the ranks of Napoleon’s army, wearing the epaulettes and moustaches of his *avant garde*, or caracoling among his voltigeurs. There still live some few who occupy posts of honour and of trust, which the government of Louis Dix-huit bestowed in utter ignorance of antecedents; while many of those who had mourned their bondage the most bitterly, lived to regret it, with yearning for the quiet which it yielded, and which they have lost for ever.

“‘One of the most striking examples of the vanity of human wishes may be found in the history of Eugène de B——, who had been my fellow salver-bearer at the visit of the Bishop of Bordeaux to St. Sulpice. This was considered an office of honour and bestowed upon the two best wranglers of the season. My companion was one of the handsomest young men I ever beheld; tall and dark, with all the fire of the south in his black eye

and swarthy complexion, and the impress of high descent stamped upon his features. He was the natural son of a nobleman holding a high office about the court, and might hope through this channel to rise to the loftiest dignity and honour in the church. It was not known who his mother was, but it was whispered amongst us that she must have been either Jewess or Bohemian—a belief to which his singular eye and chiselled features gave rise. He was of a proud, impassioned character, violent and indomitable; one with whom his teachers and those in authority were obliged to pause before they ventured to rush into open warfare. Neither penitence nor reprimand had ever been able to tame his violent, irascible nature, and, on more than one occasion, had it not been for the great honour which his learning and acquirements conferred on the establishment, he would have been expelled.

“His fiery soul revolted at the idea of entering the Church. I have seen him shudder with disgust as he donned the black serge dress which denoted his calling, and absolutely refuse to walk in his rank in the processions, which, at certain festivals, formed part of the ceremonies of the day. His dreams were all of a military life and military glory. He told me himself, that, proud as he was, he had *knelt* to his father to beg him to suffer him to embrace the profession of arms. He would have been a knight of Malta—a volunteer—even a private soldier—anything, so long as he might be permitted to follow the bent of his inclination, and join the army; but his father had said coldly, that his interest in the army was all swallowed up by his other sons, and, besides, that he disapproved greatly of this clashing of interests between young men of the same name, who yet bore it under circumstances so different; that he would not countenance any change of profession; that he might rely on his protection so long as he continued obedient to his commands, and that a fortune, such as would satisfy his most ardent ambition, awaited him on the completion of his studies, if he would remain content in the calling which his relatives had chosen for him.

“ ‘ From such reasoning there was no appeal, and poor Eugène remained at the *Séminaire*, cursing his fate, and nursing his bitterness against the existing order of things, which thus left him helpless and without defence, the slave of another’s will, to follow the very calling he so much despised. You will readily believe that, with these sentiments, he was one of those who yielded the most readily to the influence of the new doctrines which the philosophers of that day had begun to preach with so much success. He had frequently been severely reprimanded, and sometimes even harshly punished for his undisguised approval of the new tenets, for among his class-fellows he sought not to conceal his sentiments, but proclaimed aloud his contempt of the aristocracy, his hatred of the oppressors of the people, his opinion that the king would one day be taken to task for his weak administration ; and, above all, his tongue waged loudest war against the queen, poor Marie Antoinette. ‘ *Autrichienne*, ‘ *l’étrangère*, the ‘ cruel she-wolf,’ the heartless dissipator of the *deniers du peuple*.

“ ‘ He left the *Séminaire* with these feelings still existing ; he was much younger than myself, and I lost sight of him for some time ; I only heard accidentally that he had been appointed to serve one of the chapels of Notre Dame, merely while awaiting a vacancy to occur in some rich prebend or fat abbaye, to which his father might have credit to get him appointed. Meanwhile, the revolution broke out, and Eugène stood free to take the path from which he had been forcibly driven while dependent on his father’s will. Of course, after what I knew of his character, it did not in the least surprise me to learn that he had thrown his frock *aux orties*, or that he had chosen to enter the army ; but what really did surprise me to a great degree was the astounding information which was given me by his brother, the Marquis de B——, that he had attached himself to the broken remnants of the *gardes-du-corps* ; that he had followed them most pertinaciously as a volunteer ; that he had twice been severely wounded in defending the queen from the fury of the mob ; and that he was the indivi-

dual who had carried the dauphin, at the very risk and peril of his life, across the Allée des Feuillans, on the day of the memorable attack!

“And what became of him after this?” inquired I of his brother, already in my own mind anticipating the answer, for there were but few of those who had made themselves the least conspicuous in the like manner who escaped.

“‘Why, he was of course arrested,’ replied the marquis, ‘and thrown into prison, but was discharged on suspicion of madness, although he was no more mad than I am. He remained in Paris without seeking concealment during the hottest period of the *terreur*, and by a most extraordinary chance, was suffered to go unharmed, doubtless protected by the same suspicion of insanity. My father and myself had joined the *armée de Condé*, and would then have been glad of the acquisition of such a bold, brave spirit, to the cause. With the view of his passing the frontier, we succeeded, by dint of the greatest privations, in raising a sum of money which we had conveyed to him. He thanked us sincerely, but said *he could not desert his post nor join us till his task was fulfilled!* With alarm we heard of him again at the execution of the queen, when he made himself remarkable by his conduct at the scaffold. It appears that he threw himself beneath the wheels of the cart in which that unfortunate princess was transported to her doom, and narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by the infuriated *poissardes* for his loud and outrageous vituperations at their cruelty. He escaped, however, by his extreme good fortune once again, and we were once more appealed to for money to ‘procure him a passage out of this horrid country,’ wrote he, ‘where neither innocence nor beauty could find favour in the sight of men more savage and cruel than the beasts of the field.’ He refused to tell us in what manner he had disposed of the immense sum we had already, at great risk and inconvenience, sent him for the same purpose. Nevertheless, so great was our anxiety for his safety, and so great the desire that was felt throughout the whole *armée de Condé*

for the acquisition of so valuable a member to its ranks, that a subscription was raised among us, poor as we were, and once more was the sum required despatched to this *enfant prodigue*, while we awaited in terror his safe arrival.'

" 'The marquis paused in his narrative, and then added, 'And, from that hour to this, I have never beheld him, although he was living, until lately, not far from my own château in Bretagne.'

" 'Why, then, came he not to join you?' said I. 'Did he escape from the country?'

" 'He did.'

" 'And what became of him after this?'

" 'He became a MONK!' replied the marquis. 'With the money we had raised at so much toil and pains, he left the country and went to Italy, where he entered a convent of Camuldules: but, after the Restoration, finding the rules of this order not severe enough, he returned to France, and entered the monastery of La Trappe. It is but a few months ago that I received a letter from the superior of the convent, informing me of my brother's death, and mentioning that, although it was against the regulations of the order to admit of the bequeathing of any legacy to the laity, yet, in consideration of the marvellous piety of brother Eugène, he was willing to forward to me, according to his dying wish, the bequest which he had made me. This letter was accompanied by a small sealed packet, which contained about a yard of narrow black ribbon, and a receipt in due form for a sum of money which I instantly remembered was the exact amount despatched in the first instance to my brother from the *armée de Condé*! The writing was in the hand of *Henri Samson, the executioner*, signed by him, and bearing witness that the money had been received on delivery to the citizen Eugène B—— of the black ribbon which had bound the forehead and held back the hair of the *citoyenne* Capet on the morning of her execution.

" 'It was all stained, and stiff with drops of blood. There were a few lines hurriedly written on the back of

this paper by the hand of Eugène, wherein he said that he wished not to leave behind him the suspicion that he had disposed in an unworthy manner of the money which we had had so much difficulty in raising, and that he desired that I should become possessor of this relic, and that, if possible, it should be preserved in the family from generation to generation. He then merely added that he felt sure, from the knowledge of my sentiments, that I should cast no reproach upon his memory for having spent the sum in the acquisition of this treasure—this memorial of one, who, from having been a martyr upon earth, was now a saint in heaven.

“The marquis told me that he had immediately despatched the ribbon to Gratz, deeming that the relic would be most appreciated by the royal lady who sits there in desolate grandeur to mourn the fate of all whom she has loved in this world. He showed me, however, the receipt, which is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary *pieces justificatives* which could possibly be produced, and would, I doubt not, readily find a purchaser at a higher price than that for which it was given in acknowledgment.

“Such was the history of my fellow salver-bearer. After a youth spent in burning vows, in oaths and protestations of what would be his achievements, should he ever be freed from that sombre habit and that slavish tonsure—with a heart beating high with courage, a soul burning for honour and distinction, no sooner had I obtained the freedom for which he had so long sighed, than he hastened to bury all hope, ambition, and liberty beneath the cowl and lowly gabardine of the Trappist. It is evident that his boiling imagination and ardent fancy had been struck with the charms and matchless grace of Marie Antoinette as soon as he had beheld her; he had nursed this passion through years of sorrow and despair, and, when all was over, had sought this solitude but to dwell undisturbed with the memory of her whom he had loved so long, and with devotion so true and yet so hopeless.

“‘What a pity,’ said the prince, with a malicious

smile, as he concluded his story, 'that your favourite, Alexandre Dumas, or Eugène Sue, should not have been apprised of the existence of my poor comrade! What a fine five-act melodrama or eight-volumed romance would have been drawn from such materials, could either of them but have procured an hour's interview with him, even through the famous hole in the garden-wall at Meilleraye, by which I am told much knowledge of the interior arrangements of the Trappists gets abroad into the world.'

"M. de Talleyrand never will lose an opportunity of giving a playful *coup de patte* to the *romantiques*, whom, like all the followers of the school of Voltaire, he holds in most especial aversion; and many are the amicable battles which he and I are in the habit of fighting together upon this subject."

"Do you ever meet any of the prince's fellow-students of Saint Sulpice at the Hôtel Talleyrand?"

"There is but one who frequents it," replied C.; "for in general it is they who rather shun the recollections which the *ci-devant* Abbé de Perigord must bear with him. His intercourse with them has ever been frank and free. As he never played the part of a hypocrite with them, so has he never had to fear detection, or to dread an encounter with those who could tell of his early life.

"There is something touching in the candour and simplicity with which the prince will sometimes converse of Saint Sulpice with the individual to whom I now allude: the only one of his class-fellows with whom he has maintained any degree of intimacy, and whom he has bound to himself by ties of the deepest gratitude. He is the Curé of Saint Thomas, one of the most simple-hearted and virtuous of men, and one whom, I think, it would much surprise were he to be told that the Prince de Talleyrand, in spite of his apostasy, had ever been taxed with foul falsehood and black treason, and all the other crimes which have been laid to his charge by the hackneyed writers of the day. In the eyes of the good man (and if ever there was a saint upon earth, it is he),

M. de Talleyrand has never been guilty but of one fault, which he qualifies by naming it a *tort*, when, in a misguided moment, he left the Church for the allurements of the world; but nothing, however, can persuade the worthy curé that the prince would not have returned, had he not been prevented by his marriage. I know nothing more delightful than to listen to the conversation of these two old friends, most particularly when relating to the olden days, and to the *Séminaire*. The prince is really much attached to M. D——; and I remember his being highly incensed upon taking up a volume of some of the modern spurious memoirs, wherein the old curé was mentioned with ridicule, on account of his extreme simplicity. He told me the true story of the good man, which was there related in a garbled form, and which he, who was at Saint Sulpice at the time the adventure occurred, of course remembered well, and told *con gusto*.

“It appears that the good curé, who all his life has been remarkable for his child-like simplicity and credulity, was known at the *Séminaire* by the sobriquet of ‘*Providence*,’ which he had acquired from his readiness to believe in the intervention of Heaven, whenever the cause was a worthy one, however trifling it might appear to vain, weak mortals like ourselves. He had risen one cold snowy morning in December, to attend early matins at some church in the neighbourhood, and had dressed himself stealthily and in darkness, fearing to disturb his chum, M. de Séze, who, worldling as he was, snored on, heedless that it was one of the most solemn festivals in all the year, the feast of St. Nicolas. Meanwhile, the good youth stole shivering down the stairs and through the gloomy streets, clasping his breviary beneath his arm, and repeating all the way most eloquent invocations to Our Lady of the Burning Brand, the patroness of charcoal burners, for a little of that warmth which she bestows so liberally upon her votaries, to enable him even to feel the beads of his rosary as he passed them through his stiffened fingers.

“On arriving at the church-door, he was assailed, or rather waylaid, by a poor woman, an old pensioner of

his, who rushed forward and fell at his feet the moment he appeared, declaring that she was a lost creature unless he came to her help; that she had passed the whole night wandering in the streets; that her landlord refused to give her admittance to her lodging to take away her few paltry rags, unless she paid him what was owing for the rent, which she had no means of doing unless through his bounty. Now it so happened that the young *Séminariste*, never overburdened with the good things of this world, found himself at that peculiar moment entirely *à sec*, and was awaiting his monthly allowance of pocket-money before he could venture to make his appearance among his poor pensioners, so boundless were his charities, so great his nervous dread of being compelled to refuse himself the pleasure of bestowing relief upon the needy—the only pleasure, indeed, which he ever allowed himself to enjoy—the only way in which he suffered himself to expend the scanty pittance which his aged mother could spare from her poor income for procuring, as she imagined, some few luxuries for her son.

“It was in vain, however, that the young abbé endeavoured to assure the poor woman of his utter inability to assist her this once. In vain he endeavoured to shake her off—she clung to his knees—she bathed his feet with her tears—she called on the Lord to bless him, her tender benefactor—she *knew* that he would relieve her—that he would not have the heart to see her four poor fatherless children turned into the streets to starve. What was a miserable sum of three small crowns (*petits écus*) to such a noble gentleman? Why, he would not miss such a paltry sum at night, were his pocket picked of it before he returned home.

“‘But my good woman,’ said he, completely overcome by her importunity, ‘rich as you think me, I have not at this moment a single *sou* in my possession.’”

“‘Nay, nay, feel in your pockets, monseigneur: you will surely find enough to save me and my helpless babes from starving. It is not much, my lord bishop (for you will surely become one day a bishop), only three poor crowns!’”

“ ‘But on my word, *ma bonne amie*, I have it not—were you to search my pockets through, I tell you again, you would not find a single *sou*.’

“ ‘Ay, that is ever the way,’ screamed the woman, clinging to the skirt of his *soutane*, which she held fast in her grasp: ‘that is ever the way with rich and noble gentlemen whose pockets are lined with gold and silver—they never have a coin so small as a single *sou*—but search, in Heaven’s name, and you will surely find my three poor crowns, which are all that stand between me and perdition.’

“ ‘Nay, then, if you believe me not—see rather if I tell not truth,’ said the poor lad, completely at his wit’s end; and, as he said the words, he turned the pockets of his *soutane* inside out—when, what was his surprise (oh, miracle!) out rolled upon the ground three brand new silver small crowns, which seemed to jingle with most heavenly music as they fell at the feet of the poor mendicant, who, with a shriek of joy, gathered them up, and rushed from the church, before the thunderstruck abbé had as yet recovered from the awe and wonder into which the occurrence had thrown him. He remained for some moments riveted to the spot in a sort of beatified trance, unable to imagine it possible that so great a miracle could have been vouchsafed to so unworthy a sinner as himself. Once more he plunged his hands eagerly into the pockets of his *soutane*—but no other coin was forthcoming. Yes—it was evident—Providence had vouchsafed this miracle by way of encouragement to his weak endeavours. He put up an inward prayer for protection against the sin of self-conceit, as the thought overtook him, and, presently recovering himself, he rushed to the altar of the Virgin, and breathed forth his gratitude at her feet. So great was his emotion, that he resolved at once to spend the whole day in the church, in fasting and in prayer, that no earthly sentiment might mingle with the heavenly feeling thus awakened within him.

“ The poor abbé was, indeed, so elevated with the adventure, that he felt neither cold nor hunger, but

remained the whole day praying at the different altars; nor did he suffer a morsel to pass his lips until set of sun. He then returned to the *Séminaire* full of humility and gratitude, determined not to tell his adventure to any of his comrades, in dread of their unbelieving mockery. They were, however, all abroad—for was it not the feast of St. Nicolas, the gayest holiday in the year, the festival of the patron saint of all the youths and unmarried men in France; when even the poor *Séminaristes* were allowed to spend the evening outside the walls of Saint Sulpice?—and they had, of course, all taken advantage of the permission, excepting M. de Sèze, who rushed down the stairs in a perfect fury, as soon as the step of poor ‘Providence’ was heard; and, without a word of explanation, began to kick and cuff him most unmercifully, loading him with reproaches, until he was forced to pause for want of breath; and then the unhappy object of all this wrath was told that he deserved to be thrown from the window of the seventh story, for having deprived, by his carelessness, an old chum and comrade of his day’s holiday, by taking his new *soutane* in the dark, and leaving his old rusty one in its place; and, worse than all, depriving him of the means of diverting his *ennui*, by robbing him of his money, three brand new crowns which he had put aside for this very occasion, and which he would find in the left-hand pocket!

“The miracle was then explained! The poor abbé, crest-fallen and discomfited, slunk away, forced to confess the truth, and his utter inability to make good the sum at that moment. The good-natured M. de Sèze was, however, so diverted at the adventure, that he thought himself amply revenged for the annoyance he had suffered, by the mortification which poor ‘Providence’ had to endure and the disappointment he expressed at finding that, after all, he had not been made the object of a *miracle*.

“‘It is most extraordinary,’ said the prince, who had been telling me this anecdote of M. D——, one day after he had just left us, ‘that this adventure did not in any degree lessen his confidence in the interposition of

Providence in his affairs, notwithstanding all the mockery and derision of which he had been made the object after this misadventure. On the contrary, he gave himself up with the greatest confidence to the decrees of that Providence which had never deceived him, and which certainly bore him through the most perilous and troublous times without harm or molestation. He never emigrated during the revolution; he remained at his post; and, whether he was deemed too insignificant for annoyance, or whether, in consequence of the great love which was borne him by his parishioners, it was thought prudent to overlook the fact of his remaining in the country, I know not; but it is certain that, without defiance, and yet without servility, he remained, and was unharmed—perhaps the only instance throughout the whole of France.

“Another specimen of his trust in Providence is worth recording, as it may give you an insight into the state of feeling at the time, and of the enthusiasm which existed, even in remote country districts, at the period of the breaking up of the old system. After leaving the *Séminaire*, M. D— was appointed to a small cure in the neighbourhood of Rambouillet, which yielded him not more than about twelve hundred francs per annum. You may readily suppose that, with a knowledge of this fact, I was much surprised to find, on paying him a visit at his *Presbytère*, that throughout the whole country round his name was mentioned with prayers and blessings by the poor: not for his attention to their ghostly comforts, not for his guidance in spiritual matters; but for his munificent charities, his assistance in all their pecuniary difficulties, wherein he always came to their aid, with even more readiness than the inhabitants of the *château* themselves. Meanwhile, as far as his own personal indulgences were concerned, the poorest peasant in his parish lived more sumptuously than he.

“I found him in a ruinous old parsonage-house, with scarcely the smallest of the comforts of life; and yet full of the most splendid dreams of all the happiness he meant to confer by his administration in the district to which he had been appointed pastor. There was to

be no more misery, no more want—the golden age was to be revived—in short, his visions were much of the same nature, only partaking of more simplicity, as those of your idol, Fourier. I could not help smiling, as we sat down to our repast of two hard-boiled eggs, and water *à discrétion*, to hear him declare his resolution of enabling his parishioners to have each one, according to the vow of Henri Quatre, a fat fowl to boil for his Sunday dinner.

“ ‘But, my good friend, how will you be enabled to procure for them all these luxuries?’

“ ‘Oh, I have hit upon a plan,’ replied he, chuckling with glee, ‘which is a much better financial scheme than any ever devised by either Calonne or Necker. So simple too—to be understood by the meanest capacity;’ as he spoke, he went to a small cupboard in the wall, and drew from thence a long string of old and dirty playing-cards. ‘This is my coin,’ exclaimed he, triumphantly, waving the greasy mass before my eyes; ‘with these simple pieces, which my poor pensioners deliver to the various tradespeople, they can procure in the village food, fire, and clothing—with these old cards, begged from my evening games of piquet with the old Marquise de Baugency, I can purchase for them the comforts, without which they cannot live.’

“ ‘But in the name of Heaven, who will pay the providers?’

“ ‘Oh, I must trust to Providence for that!’

“ ‘I must confess that I left my worthy friend with a mind full of uneasiness, notwithstanding his trust—the more so, when I found, upon inquiry, that he was deeply indebted in every direction for the very provisions which he continued to distribute with such lavish hand. But so great was the respect his name inspired—so great the confidence felt by his flock in his honour and integrity, that no alarm was experienced respecting the payment, it being imagined generally, that he was the agent of some rich and charitable person, for the distribution of these alms, and that they would be paid as soon as he himself received the money. After having

given him for his poor what I could spare—a mere drop in the ocean, when viewed with reference to the heaviness of the debts which he had incurred—I took my departure, full of anxiety respecting the future consequences of this thoughtless expenditure on the part of one, whose whole stock of worldly goods would not have satisfied the demands of even one of his numerous creditors.

“ ‘ However, other more serious events coming, meanwhile, to occupy my attention, I lost sight of my old friend, or if ever I *did* think of him, it was with a faint terror, lest, never having heard of him since my visit to Rambouillet, he might have been reported to the bishop of his diocese, and have incurred imprisonment and disgrace for his imprudent practices. The great encounter between the people and their rulers had commenced, and all France was summoned to assist at the first parley, before hostilities began—the assembling of the *états généraux* at Versailles.

“ ‘ I arrived at Versailles the day before the procession from the Palace to St. Louis, and was walking arm and arm with Siéyes upon the *tapis vert*, gazing with curiosity on the scene. The day was heavenly, (it sometimes seems to me as though we have no such weather now, as we had then,) the *tapis vert* was crowded—courtiers in their court costume—officers in uniform—the *haut clergé* attired with the brilliant tokens of the rank each held in the Church—were all gathered in groups, either sauntering beneath the shade of the *charmille* hedge, where the first tender buds of May were just sufficient to screen the promenaders from the rays of the spring-tide sun—or else seated on the stone benches along the alleys, conversing with the ladies, who, all adorned in the gayest colours, and wearing the brightest smiles, seemed bent on rendering the holiday as brilliant as it was possible it could be.

“ ‘ On the other side, (the truth *may* be told now without mischief,) avoided by the rest, as though they bore the seeds of pestilence within them, the members of the *tiers état* conversed in busy, whispering knots;

no merry laughter was heard from *them*, no pleasant trifling or mirthful jesting was seen lighting up *their* discourse. All was dark and gloomy, care sat on every brow, and that their converse was of weighty matters, was evident, by the tone of mystery in which it was carried on, and the sudden silence which took place among them whenever any stray member of the *noblesse* happened to pass by to join the glittering throng on the other side. Their very costume contrasted strongly with that of their contemptuous superiors; they all wore, and contrary to anticipation, were *proud* to wear the dress to which they had been condemned—the black hose and surtout, and short black cloak, which, by the antique sumptuary law, denoted the vile, base-born *roturier*.

“It was altogether a scene such as I shall never forget while memory has power to act. I never remember in my whole life to have been inspired with so profound a sentiment of melancholy as at that hour. I could scarcely refrain from shedding tears, at perceiving, by what was already taking place, what must of necessity come to pass before long. As we drew near to the palace, the long windows of the suite of apartments looking towards the *Pièce d'Apollon*, and then known as the *Appartements du Dauphin*, were thrown open, and out rushed, like a flight of butterflies, the whole bevy of court beauties, all in high glee, in towering spirits, elated at the prospect of the morrow's pageant, which they evidently looked upon but as a show wherein they were to see much that would amuse, and wherein they should be seen to the very best advantage, as, fortunately, the *Salle des Menus* was lighted from *above*, which was so much more favourable to the effect of rouge and *mouches* than the broad, glaring, side light of the *grande galerie*.

“I cannot tell you how the sound of that joyous laughter grated on my ear, as it caused both Sièyes and myself to pause while we watched those light forms, as they playfully chased each other on the terrace among the flowers. The queen was with them there; and I

think I see her now, as she stood leaning for support against the pedestal of the statue of Silenus, opposite to the marble staircase, so greatly was she overcome by the fit of laughter into which she had been thrown by some absurd mistake on the part of the Countess de Provence, for her ringing voice and childlike accent reached our ears as we stood close below the balustrade, as she exclaimed, pointing to her sister-in-law, "*Cette chère sœur* will never learn to speak French!" That radiant face and beaming eye could not at such a moment be seen without exciting a feeling of *pity*, and this I know was shared by Sièyes, for, without uttering a word, he pressed my arm significantly, and led me from the spot towards a group of the *tiers-état* who were standing at the entrance of the *bosquets*. As we drew near, I descried the Abbé Maury, who was, as usual, declaiming with all his might, although in a low tone, to an eager crowd of listeners. Just as we came up, he concluded some section of his discourse with this question, 'Eh bien, Messieurs, if the noblesse treat us so, what are we to do?' "

" '*Why, trust to Providence.*' " was the answer from one of those standing near. The voice made me start, so little was I prepared to hear it in such a place. I turned to the speaker—it was indeed my own dear D——!

" 'Of course my inquiries and his replies followed each other in rapid succession, and I was almost led to believe that his philosophy was the best that had ever been devised, when he informed me that he had come to Versailles as representative of the clergy, deputed by his *commune*, the electors being of course in this, as in every other case, compelled to disburden him of his debts before he could leave the canton. 'It was quite unexpected,' said the good man, 'almost a miracle; for how could I dream even a short month ago of deputies, and notables, and gatherings at Versailles. You see I was right in trusting to Heaven for relief. However, it *did* astonish the worthy *bourgeoise* a little, when they discovered how dearly they would have to pay for their choice; and they might perhaps have cancelled it had such a proceeding been

allowed. *Mais c'est égal!*—summer is coming on, harvest time will soon draw near, and the poor of my parish have, meanwhile, been clothed and fed!

“It would perhaps be difficult to meet with a more beautiful realization of the spirit of Scripture than is to be found in this anecdote. He has met with his reward, for “*mes pauvres*,” as he always called his little flock, protected him through the dangers and persecutions which he subsequently had to undergo; and, at the Restoration, he was appointed to the cure of St. Thomas, one of the best *benéfices* of Paris, which he still holds, and where, until these very few years, when, from old age, he has become incapacitated for preaching, he was wont to deliver many and many a pithy sermon upon the wonderful “bounty of Providence.”

“There is scarcely a visitor at the Hotel Talleyrand,” resumed C., “who does not, as in the case of the *curé* of St. Thomas, elicit some quaint history, some *piquant* anecdote of days gone by, on the part of the prince. His memory is so wonderful, that he can scarcely relate the simplest trait of his own life, without being led into many other stories illustrative of the times in which the incidents happened, and to which he knows, better than any living being, how to give a charm, an interest, which will sometimes render the smallest circumstance of value, and which is a gift so highly esteemed by our nation, that *l'art de raconter* has ever been placed far above any other accomplishment in the qualifications requisite to form an agreeable member of society. You will in general find the prince *indulgent* when relating anecdotes even of persons from whom it may be a well-known fact that he has differed all his life. I have often heard him say that ‘experience teaches us indulgence,’ and that ‘the wisest man is he who doubts his own judgment with regard to the motives which actuate his fellow-men.’ I have sometimes heard him entertain his intimate circle, during a long evening, with a vast number of amusing traits and anecdotes relating to his fellow-labourers in the vineyard,’ without once having recourse to scandal or ridicule, which I consider the very perfection of the story-teller’s

science. The only person with whose name he likes, even now, sometimes to disport himself in his *moments de malice* is Madame Necker, whom he never could tolerate, and with whom, even in her most palmy days, he scrupled not to declare himself openly at war. He really *felt* with regard to her what he so happily expressed, ‘She has every virtue and but one fault, and that is, she is insupportable.’ The good lady never forgave his comparing her to a ‘frigate riding at anchor, and receiving a salute from a friendly power,’ when she stood upon her own hearth-rug at the Hôtel Necker, upon the occasion of her weekly receptions; her ample proportions obscuring the light of the fire, as, with pinched-up features and prudish smile, she listened to the compliments of the Academicians, whom she assembled but for this purpose. The ‘straight-laced Genevese,’ as he calls her, has furnished him, I verily believe, with more witty *bon mots*, with more stinging epigrams, than even his most bitter enemy.

“His feeling towards her daughter, Madame de Staël, has much of the same nature. To this hour, his *amour-propre* is wounded by the obligation he owes her for having obtained, through her credit with Barras, his recall from exile, and thus, in reality, laid the foundation of his fortune. This unwillingness to own a debt may savour somewhat of ingratitude; but the prince will be excused when it is remembered that Madame de Staël possessed, in common with all persons of a nervous, irritable temperament, an excess of that susceptibility which phrenologists have denominated ‘approbateness,’ which made her over-value her success, and never cease bringing it to the memory of the person obliged. This, to a proud, sarcastic temper like that of the prince, must have been peculiarly annoying, the more so as Napoleon, with the gross, soldier-like want of tact which he would sometimes display, loved to remind him both of the immensity of the service, and by whom it had been rendered, and then would laugh coarsely to see him wince under the reproach, which all his wonted philosophy did not enable him to bear with calmness.

“He had never the same high opinion of Madame de Staël which the world professed. He thought her style pedantic and *guindé*, and would complain, when any of her compositions were read to him, of their total want of nature and *coloris*. I have often heard him say, that those who read the writings might fairly boast of knowing the writer, for that nothing could more resemble Madame de Staël herself than the false, exaggerated sentiments and superficial erudition of her compositions. I have seldom seen him enjoy more keenly a story than the one he will sometimes tell of an adventure which befel Madame de Staël at a party where he himself was present. I think it was at a *fête champêtre* given by Madame Helvetius at her pretty little château at Auteuil. The garden was full of all the talent of Europe and America combined, for it was just at the height of the American mania, and the fête, indeed, was given to the great champion of liberty, the regenerator of his race—*L'homme de la nature*—the immortal Franklin. I could tell you, by the bye, some curious circumstances connected with the great patriot, which you would be glad to hear, and which I am sure the prince would be equally glad to communicate, for he has but small esteem for the *faux bonhomme*, as he called him.

“Madame Helvetius was one of the most charming women that the world ever produced. The style and type of such beings seem lost ever since the revolution. Without being strictly handsome, she always succeeded, without effort, in obtaining more admiration than the professed beauties who might be in the same company with her. There was a charm, a grace in every action, in every word she uttered, which has never been surpassed. Although she herself possessed no literary talent, there was not a celebrity in Europe who was not proud of her notice: and her assemblies in Paris, and her fêtes at Auteuil are not forgotten to this day. Upon the occasion to which I refer, Madame de Staël was making her *début* in the Parisian literary world, and calculating upon even more success than she obtained, although, had she been a person of moderate pretensions,

she would have been more than satisfied. She had just arrived in Paris; she herself, and all those connected with her, had been bright particular stars in the somewhat dim and cloudy horizon of Geneva.

“On her first appearance at the *réunion*, Madame Helvetius had, of course, with well-bred courtesy, paid her most particular attention, but having other guests to welcome, had left her after a while, to superintend the distribution of the amusements about the grounds. Once or twice she had passed Madame de Staël sitting gloomily on the bench where she had left her, and at last sent M. de Talleyrand to keep her company; but M. de Talleyrand had tact enough to know that, being himself no literary lion, he was no company for Madame de Staël, and so immediately went in quest of society more congenial to her taste. He soon returned, in company with the Abbé Monti, whose poems were at that time the rage all over Europe, and whose coming put the fair authoress into the best of humours. M. de Talleyrand sat down on the bench beside them, in silence, feeling himself quite extinguished by so much talent, and remained a passive listener, anxious for improvement. The conversation was overwhelming with erudition, and then the compliments were poured forth like rain from an April sky,—the Abbé ‘had never reckoned upon so great an honour as that of meeting the first writer of the age;’ madame ‘little dreamed when she arose that morning, that the day would be marked by so auspicious an event as the meeting with the Abbé.’

“‘I have devoured every word that has escaped from Sappho’s pen,’ said the abbé.

“‘I cannot sleep until I read the charming odes from the Italian “*Tyrtæus*,”’ said the lady.

“‘Have you seen my last endeavour?’ said the abbé.

“‘Alas! not yet,’ sighed the lady, ‘although report speaks of it more highly than of any which have preceded it.’

“‘I have it here!’ exclaimed the abbé, eagerly drawing a small volume from his pocket. ‘Allow me to present it to you, madame; a poor homage, indeed, to

so much genius, but it may prove interesting to one who has had so much success in heroic poetry.'

" 'Thanks, thanks,' cried Madame de Staël, seizing the little volume with every demonstration of overpowering gratitude. 'This is indeed a treasure, and will be prized by me far beyond gold or jewels.'

" 'She turned over the leaves slowly, while the delighted abbé watched her with a charming self-complacency—then suddenly dropping it into her lap, she exclaimed, turning on the abbé a languid glance, 'You were talking of heroic poetry, dear abbé; have you seen my last attempt—a dramatic scene, "l'Exile"—a slight and poor imitation of some of your own?'

" 'I have not been so blessed as to obtain a copy,' replied the abbé.

" 'How fortunate that I should have one in my reticule!' said madame, hurriedly seizing the strings of the bag suspended from her arm, and drawing forth a thin volume in boards. The abbé bent low over it as she presented it, and kissing it with reverence, placed it by his side, and the conversation—that is to say, the complimenting—was continued with redoubled vigour.

" M. de Talleyrand then departed, and did not return till the company broke up, when he found that they had both left the bench whereon they had been seated so long together, leaving, however, the 'precious treasures,' which they had received from each other with so much gratitude, behind them! M. de Talleyrand seized upon them with inexpressible delight, thinking that they would furnish matter for innocent *persiflage*, when the loss came to be remembered by either party. But the thing was complete—they were never sought and never asked for, and he has them now in his library, and loves to show them as he tells the story of their coming into his possession.

" 'It is in this manner,' said C., as he pulled out his watch, surprised at the lateness of the hour, "that M. de Talleyrand will sometimes entertain us with familiar histories of many whom the world has set upon pedestals of its own erecting, and from which he is fain to

bring them down, although without scorn or malice, in order that we may see them more closely and know them better. You will now understand the reason why it must be so difficult to write a good 'Life of Prince Talleyrand;' there would be so little of himself, compared to what must be told of other people—the work would be so full of digressions, that it would become as bulky as a cyclopædia. Besides, a single person could not do the whole. It would require writers of different talent, of different character, of different nations—I was almost going to say of different ages—to do justice to the varied scenes wherein he himself displayed such variety of talents."

"Then why do you not, my dear friend, seize upon the branch which you have at your own disposal, and give the world the *Vie Anecdotique* of the prince?" said I. "Supposing you were to begin and try your skill by relating to me by way of practice before you publish?"

"Well, well, the idea is not a bad one," said C., laughing heartily; "it is certainly not the *matériel* that would be wanting, and when we have time and solitude it may amuse us both. *One* talent at least is secure, for you are undoubtedly a capital listener."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNTESS DE LA MOTTE, OF NECKLACE NOTORIETY.

It will easily be believed that I did not lose sight of the promise which my friend had made with so much *bouhémie*, and the very first time I found myself alone with him, I did not forget to claim it. The opportunity occurred soon after the conversation I have just recorded. We were pacing together the long picture-gallery of the château; the rain was beating in torrents against the Gothic casements, and all hopes of going abroad had been abandoned. The prince had not left his chamber that morning. He was busily engaged, and had announced his intention of remaining *invisible* until dinner. He was occupied "*à faire son Courier*," as he called it, upon which occasion I have known him sign and send off an entire bag full of letters, not one of which was despatched without having first been carefully perused and corrected by himself. The facility and precision with which he could always find the exact word which was needed, and which his secretaries would, perhaps, have been seeking for some time in vain, was matter of the greatest admiration to all who witnessed it; but he could

neither write nor dictate with ease; the most trifling *petit billet* which, when completed, appeared the very model of graceful *laiser-aller* and badinage, often gave him as much trouble to indite as one of his most complicated despatches.

This, I think, may be attributable to the neglect of his early education. Subsequent study and careful reading may impart taste and erudition, but can rarely give facility. C. told me that he has known the prince remain for more than a week upon the composition of a letter of condolence or congratulation, if it chanced to be addressed to a brother wit, or one of whose criticisms he might happen to stand in awe. In these cases, he would cause his secretary to write two or three letters, in different styles, upon the subject he had at heart, and would then compile from the number, one in his own writing, with his own piquant additions and improvements, which was soon bandied from hand to hand, and quoted in every *salon* as a *chef-d'œuvre* of wit and epigram. Those who were in the secret would smile at the unbounded praise bestowed by the journals upon the composition of his despatches (some of which are really master-pieces), and the wording of his protocols; for they well knew that they would scarcely have attracted a single moment's notice had the truth been known.

"Does he give much time to the writing of his memoirs?" asked I of C., as he was pacing thoughtfully the polished oaken boards of the gallery, in which the double line of pictures, which garnish the walls on either side, is reflected as in a mirror, so that at each step we seemed to tread upon the semblance of some great king or warrior; for with a tacit self-homage, the prince had furnished the gallery with the portraits of the sovereigns and great men of all countries, with whom he had come in contact.

"I think his memoirs were concluded some years ago," replied C., in answer to my question, "and that they have been deposited in safety, out of the pale of his own country, *comme de raison*, where they will remain until the time fixed by himself for their publication

shall have expired. Many competent judges are of opinion that, even at that distant period, the interest of their promulgation to the world will be but little diminished. There is yet so much mystery, so much which has been withheld from public scrutiny, in all the great political changes which have taken place, that there will be as much novelty in the plain, straightforward narrative of the causes which led to their occurrence, as though they were events of yesterday. From the very first years of the reign of Louis Seize, when the tone and manners of society yet smacked of the wild and dissolute freedom of the Regency, to the restraint and affectation of the Restoration, has M. de Talleyrand always borne a part in public affairs. Always floating on the tide of circumstance, he has kept himself in full view of the wondering crowd of beholders, while many of those who had set forth with better chances of success, by opposing the current, have been overwhelmed by its resistless rush.

“There cannot exist a greater proof of his cleverness and good taste, than his steady avoidance of anything like public condemnation. He has been *accused* of every crime of which humanity can be guilty, according to the caprice or fury of his enemies, but not even a misdemeanour has ever been *proved* against him. Even so long ago as when he was as yet, according to his own expression, ‘*un assez mince particulier*,’ long before the revolution, he had tact and sense enough to steer clear of intrigue, and to avoid the society of those who were suspected of dabbling in obscure political manœuvre. Indeed, had he not been wise beyond his years, he could not have escaped intimacy with the Prince-Cardinal, Louis de Rohan, he who has become famous in history for his credulity in the affair of the diamond necklace, and who, fool as he was, has yet been by many historians quoted as the origin, the first great cause, of the Revolution. This prelate, who at the time when M. de Talleyrand was a simple abbé, waiting for preferment, was already at the very acmé of dignity and power, spared no pains to conciliate the young ecclesiastic. But the Abbé de Perigord was already pos-

sessed of too much discernment not to be fully aware that these advances were less owing to any merit of his own, than to the circumstance of his mother being at the time *Dame du Palais* to Marie-Antoinette, whose good graces it had become a kind of monomania with the unfortunate cardinal to gain. The prince, to this very day, however, blesses the good fortune which sent him from Paris upon business connected with his office as *Agent du Clergé*, just at the very moment when the poor befooled cardinal, and his wily accomplice, were in the very thickest of their plot; so that his name was never mentioned throughout the whole course of the proceedings, neither as frequenter of the cardinal's hôtel, nor even as an acquaintance of his."

"Did he ever chance to meet with Madame de la Motte?"

"But once, and that was on the very occasion of his going to take leave of the cardinal, before he left Paris. He had been invited to sup with his Eminence, *en petit comité*, and had come prepared to undergo long and *ennuyeux* discourses upon the various duties of his new office—the necessity of vigilance in detecting fraud—of conciliation to prevent discord; in short, he almost dreaded the interview, fully anticipating the *mauvais quart d'heure* which is usually spent by a young, inexperienced priest, when delivered up defenceless to the torrent of recommendations and warning, of advice and moral instances, which invariably fall to his share when alone with his superior. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of the Abbé de Perigord, when, in spite of the terms in which the invitation had been couched in the cardinal's own hand-writing—'*Venez souper tête-à-tête avec moi*'—to find the apartment into which he was ushered blazing with light, and signs of ceremony and festivity evident in all the arrangements which had been made for his reception.

"‘I found,’ said the prince, in whose words I will tell you the history of this adventure, ‘on entering the *petit salon*, which was already lighted with perfumed tapers, and redolent of the fragrant essences which the cardinal loved so much, seated by the blazing fire,

which was, according to the custom of the Hôtel-Cardinal, composed of scented woods, a lady, whom I instantly recognised as the Princesse de Guéménée, ex-governess to the royal children, but who had some time before been compelled to resign office, in consequence of the disgraceful bankruptcy of her husband, which had not a little contributed to lower the *noblesse* in the eyes of the people, and formed one of the most astounding events by which that turbulent era was marked. The princess was alone; which circumstance rather astonished me, for I had come prepared with an apology for being late, and I wondered at the absence of the cardinal, as it was already considerably past the time at which he had requested me to be present. The princess herself seemed annoyed as I entered. She had evidently been waiting for some time, for she was in no very pleasant humour, and scarcely deigned to return a civil acknowledgment to my humble salutations and inquiries. However, I was easily consoled for any mortification I might have experienced at this apparent indifference, for the poor princess had but few ideas to dispense, and I therefore considered that it might be as a matter of prudence that she hesitated about wasting them on so humble an individual as myself.

“ Upon this occasion, I was contented with warming my hands at the scented blaze, and gazing on the portly form of the princess, reclining in ample majesty on the green satin fauteuil before me. Perhaps there never existed a type of ridicule and exaggeration more strongly defined than the Princesse de Guéménée, particularly at this period of her life, when, having lost, by extravagance and folly, the position to which she was entitled by birth and fortune, she appeared as though seeking to gain distinction in another way, by exaggerating the follies of the times, and affording in her person a complete epitome of all the extravagance and bad taste for which the court had become, even then, proverbial. At the very hour of which I am speaking, even when under the ban of dismissal from the court, of reproof from the sovereign, and of the condemnation of all persons of credit and character throughout the kingdom

—when it was a notorious fact that her husband and herself were paying loans upon the estates which yet remained to them at the rate of fifty and seventy per cent. —was she attired in all the absurd and costly frippery which a depraved fashion might have excused some years before, when she was yet in possession of the stupendous fortune which so long had caused the Rohans to rival in splendour the sovereign himself, but which would only excite pity and disgust in the minds of those aware of the desperate state of her affairs.

“ ‘ She was attired in a robe of I know not what kind of rich stuff, which stood on end, and completely filled the immense arm-chair in which she was seated. This again was entirely covered with the richest lace, which, looped with ornaments in brilliants, representing *scorpions*, fell over either elbow of the chair, completely disguising its form, thus leaving the princess to represent to the beholder the richly-decorated joss of some Chinese temple, that scorns, in virtue of its divinity, the support which mortals need when seated. Altogether I scarcely ever remember to have seen a more ridiculous figure than that of the *Princesse de Guéménée* as she sat thus before me, the light of the fire dancing upon the diamonds with which she was covered from head to foot, now resting upon the thick rouge upon her cheeks, then flying off to some absurd and comical ornament with which she had thought fit to load the towering fabric of her powdered hair, and making her countenance take all kinds of fantastic expressions, as though she had been the sport of some merry demon.

“ ‘ I endeavoured, as in duty bound, to divert the *ennui* under which the princess was labouring, by trying to recount some of the latest news of the court. I had just returned from Versailles, where I had spent the day bidding adieu to my friends, and thought that it might be agreeable to her to hear the newest gossip. But I could gain no attention. She suffered me to talk on until I was weary, and I could see that she was not paying the slightest heed to my endeavours to amuse her. Suddenly, and in the midst of one of my most

diverting anecdotes, she roused herself by a strong effort from the fit of abstraction into which she had been plunged, and turned sharply round towards me.

“ ‘You say you have just returned from Versailles?’

“ ‘As I have had the honour to tell you, princess.’

“ ‘Did you hear of my nephew being at court, to-day?’

“ ‘Indeed I did not hear the cardinal’s name pronounced during the whole day, although I did not leave until the latest hour of admission.’

“ ‘*Mon Dieu!*’ exclaimed the princess, in a tone of the deepest emotion, ‘then he has gone thither *en secret avec cette intrigante!*’

“ ‘These were her very words, and, just as she had pronounced them, the rattle of carriage-wheels was heard in the court-yard of the Hôtel Cardinal, and presently a great noise and bustle were heard upon the staircase, with loud laughter in a female voice, which seemed to give a sort of nervous spasm to the poor Princesse de Guéménée, for she opened and shut the huge fan which she carried, with a loud impatient jerk, each time that the echo of that excited laughter reached the little *salon* where we were seated. At length, the door opened, and the cardinal entered, leading by the hand, or rather, as was the fashion of the time, by the tips of the fingers, a lady whom he introduced to the princess as the Comtesse de Valois de la Motte. The name excited my curiosity, for I had heard her story but a short time before from the lips of my mother, and had been much moved by her misfortunes. I looked at the lady with the greatest interest, and with a predetermination to discover traces of her royal descent in her person and demeanour. I was moreover wounded by the coldness of the manner of the princess towards her. I thought her conduct uncivil and inhospitable in the extreme. She never rose from her chair on the introduction taking place, but had preserved the same idol-like rigidity of posture, neither did she even condescend to return a smile in acknowledgment of all the sweet things with which the Comtesse de la Motte ceased not

to overwhelm her from the first moment of her entrance—assuring her that she had been longing for this meeting for some time past—that there was no one in the world whose acquaintance she had so much desired to make as that of the *Princesse de Guéménée*—in short, all the common-place flatteries with which little people are in the habit of soothing and allaying the adverse tempers of the great.

“It is a singular fact (and I do assure you the notion has not been forced upon my imagination by subsequent events), but I was struck with the extreme vulgarity of the tone of her address to the princess, even in the few moments which preceded our summons to the supper-table: and I had already a certain misgiving about the character of the lady from this circumstance alone. But I reserved my definitive judgment of her until we were ushered into the supper-room, for the *petit salon* was lighted with lamps of alabaster, and the light, thus beautifully softened to the eye, was rendered too dim to enable one to distinguish the play of the features, the changes of expression, all the little tokens of character which are exhibited in the countenance when under the influence of any one predominant passion. I waited then, with patience, until we were comfortably seated at supper. By good fortune, my place was opposite to the comtesse, and I was thus enabled to contemplate her to my heart's content. It was fortunate, too, that she scarcely deigned to notice my presence, so absorbed was she in her endeavours to win a smile from the princess. I was thus rendered a mere spectator of a scene, which time and the subsequent events that took place have rendered worthy of being registered among my own most interesting *souvenirs*.

“As to the cardinal, when once he had apologized to me for his late return to the hôtel, and excused himself upon the plea of having been detained at Versailles upon business connected with the affairs of *Madame la Comtesse*, he scarcely seemed to remember that I was in existence, so entirely engrossed was he with the efforts he was compelled to make, in order to excite the princess

to conversation on the one hand, and to restrain the volubility of the Comtesse de la Motte on the other. The contrast between the two female guests of the cardinal was, indeed, striking, and one was led to wonder at seeing them together at the same table.

“ ‘ You have already heard the description of Madame de Guéménée : now, Madame de la Motte was, in all points of outward appearance and manner, exactly the reverse of that mighty dame. She was a small, lively person, full of fire, and talking with a strong accent and active gesticulation. She was, without doubt, what, in the world, is called a pretty woman, for she had a fine complexion, with sparkling black eyes, and a superb range of ivory teeth, which she took every pains to display, by an incessant twist of her lips, which I remember to this day, as having produced the most unpleasant effect possible upon my nerves. She had a remarkable profusion of really fine chestnut hair, which was but half-powdered, and clustered in most bewitching ringlets round her face. Her age might have been about seven or eight-and-twenty—the very age most to be dreaded in woman ; the mind possessing all the experience of maturity—the person yet retaining all the bloom and charm of youth. Her attire was well chosen to set off her complexion, but it shocked my taste to witness the profusion of ornament and jewels with which she was adorned, even while speaking of herself as a *pauvre sollicituse*, to whom a miserly government would only accord a beggarly pension of eight hundred livres. Her diamonds, indeed, rivalled both in beauty and profusion those of the Princesse de Guéménée herself, and her dress consisted of a robe of orange-coloured *brocatelle*, shot with black, and flowered with gold. Her hands and arms were hidden by long gloves of Spanish kid, and I could readily imagine that there was coquetry in this precaution, as the hardships in which her early years had been spent, must, of necessity, have left their traces *there*.

“ ‘ I remember being struck with the reflection which forced itself upon me at the time, and being lost in admiration as I gazed upon the Comtesse de la Motte,

at the extreme ease and facility with which she had acquired the jargon and petty graces of high society. Her manners certainly gave the lie direct to the old prejudice, that it requires many years of apprenticeship to become an adept in the fashionable art. Neither did she betray at first, by any one triviality or vulgarity of expression or pronunciation, that she had not all her life been accustomed to the society in which she then found herself. The only peculiarity which might have excited suspicion in *very* particular persons, was the hurry and agitation in which she seemed to exist—a perpetual restlessness—an over-desire to excite interest and to produce effect. Mind you, I am speaking of the first hour or so, while yet she was uncertain as to the opinion which the princess might have formed of her. But after this restraint had a little worn off, and she had grown a little less guarded in her conversation, I began to perceive many incongruities in her behaviour. The effect was most extraordinary—she appeared, at one and the same moment, two distinct characters; her very voice altered, sometimes before she had concluded her sentence.

“I must do the Princesse de Guéménée the justice to declare that, throughout the whole evening, her conduct was perfect. She listened in silence, but without any evidence of ill-humour or contempt, to all the *coqueteries* and lively sallies with which the comtesse sought so earnestly to divert her. She even condescended, now and then, to applaud, but without favour, and from a distance, as she would have done from her box at the Opera to the successful efforts of the actress whose talent might for a moment have succeeded in charming her into this demonstration of approval. But it was when, at the solicitation of the cardinal, excited with the wine, of which she had partaken unsparingly, and elevated by the hope of winning the good graces of the company, Madame de la Motte launched forth into the eternal history of her “*infortunes*,” which had been her *great moyen de succès* with the numberless dupes she had made, that to me all delusion ceased at once. The *impudence* was easy to discover beneath the envelope of

affected high breeding with which she had at first concealed her determination of charming the princess, and the *aventurière* stood revealed without disguise.

“ ‘I know that you will suspect my judgment of being influenced by the conclusion of her story; but I do assure you that even then I could not help wondering that his Eminence should have admitted to his intimacy a person like Madame de la Motte. It has since become matter of surprise to all the world, that the cardinal, credulous and simple as it had pleased Heaven to make him, could ever have been so beguiled as to give the slightest degree of credit to her representations; but as for me, after having passed that single evening in her company, I almost feel inclined to believe in witchcraft. There *must* have been some evil power at work, when the Cardinal de Rohan was delivered up to the possession (no other word can express this infatuation) of the Comtesse de Valois de la Motte.’ ”

“ ‘How I should have liked to be present,’ said I, ‘and to hear from her own lips the recital of her adventures!’ ”

“ ‘**Bah!**’ said the prince, laughing, ‘I can tell you the tale, and if it prove as interesting to you as it did to me, you will not forget it more than I have done. I believe it to be strictly true in all its main points. It is a singular story, and but little known. She told it well, too, and I leave you to judge of the effect which it must have produced at the time.’ ”

“ ‘She said that her father, who, there can be no doubt was, in reality, the Count de Saint Remy de Valois, descended from Henry II., had sold the whole of his estates to a rich *fermier-général*, in order to satisfy the debts incurred by the inordinate love of splendour and expense in which his wife had indulged since their marriage. The family was, in consequence, reduced to the very lowest ebb of destitution and poverty. The mother, who was the daughter of one of the Count de Saint Remy’s vassals, had not strength of mind to bear the poverty which her own extravagance had brought upon her family, and fled, leaving her husband and

three children to endure the privations which she was so ill-disposed to share. There was an old Gothic ruin in the park, belonging to what had once been the *château* of the Counts de Saint Remy, and this the *fermier-général* consented to give up to the count and his young family. Hither, then, did the hapless little band retire, with no hope but in Heaven. The count became a confirmed misanthrope, and never stirred from the old ruin from the moment that he had fixed his abode within it. He suffered his hair and beard to grow, and refused to hold communication with any living being, save with his young children. But he took little heed of their welfare, notwithstanding his affection for them, nor seemed to care whether they were provided with bread or left to starve; and, had it not been for the kindness of the peasants of the neighbourhood, who, with native delicacy and good feeling, fearing to wound his pride, would come in secret and at night to deposit provisions upon the threshold of the mouldering edifice wherein they had taken refuge, the whole family would sometimes have been for days together without a morsel of food.

“This, however, was far from being sufficient to satisfy their wants, and the care of providing food devolved, of course, upon the eldest child Jeanne (*Madame de la Motte* herself). She would wander along the public road from sunrise to sunset, holding her little brother by the hand, and carrying her sister, yet a helpless infant, on her back, and thus the little trio, faint and weary, and covered with sordid rags, would run by the side of every carriage that passed on the highway, calling out in a piteous tone, “Charity, charity, for the love of God! A morsel of bread for three poor starving orphans, descended from the royal blood of the Valois!” This appeal failed not, of course, to attract notice.

“‘I was fair and pretty,’ said the comtesse, as she told the tale, ‘and sometimes returned laden with silver, which I hastened to convert into necessities for our use, and comforts for my father, ere I sought my home at night. This state of things lasted for more than two years. The old ruin had fallen into greater decay; the

count had fallen into a state of greater gloom and apathy, scarcely ever uttering a syllable to the children, nor seeming to take the least notice of their departure or return, nor of their efforts to procure for themselves and him the nourishment which was needful to sustain existence.

“ ‘One evening, poor Jeanne returned with her little companions, weary and footsore, to the old tower. They had been out a longer time than usual, the day had been wild and stormy, and but few travellers had passed the road, so that but small profit had been made, and there was a prospect of a supper even more scanty than usual. On entering the tower, they were struck by the unwonted silence and darkness of the place, for the count generally took upon himself the charge of feeding the fire, and at nightfall lighted a torch to read over and over again, for the millionth time, the genealogy of his family, and the title-deeds proving his descent from the Valois, the only occupation in which he now seemed to find amusement or consolation.

“ ‘Upon this occasion, however, all was dark and silent as the grave, and Jeanne, after having called her father without receiving any answer, drew near to the hearth, and blew up the few remaining embers into a sickly blaze, which just sufficed to light the interior of the tower. Her father was seated, drooping and motionless, in his customary seat in the chimney-corner, leaning against the wall, with his head bent low upon his bosom, and his hand upon his heart.’

“ ‘He is asleep,’ said Jeanne, to the little ones; ‘let us make no noise, but hurry to bed as quickly as possible that he may not be disturbed.’

“ ‘So she gave each of the children a morsel of bread and a piece of the curd-cheese eaten by the poor peasants in that part of the country, and they all three sought in haste and silence the bundle of straw allotted to their use. Here they slept soundly until the dawn. Jeanne was the first to wake, and, on perceiving the sun-beams struggling through the loop-holes in the wall, rose with the hope of having better luck than on the

preceding day, and hurriedly gathered on her rags, determined to set forth at once upon her daily errand. She was just preparing to rouse her little brother, when she was struck with terror, on turning to bid adieu to her father, to perceive that he was still seated in the chimney-nook, in the same attitude in which she had found him on returning to the tower on the evening before. He had passed the whole night seated thus without moving; his head still drooping on his bosom—his hand still pressed upon his heart! There was something so unnatural in this immobility, that the child, young as she was, felt overcome with dread. She approached the count and listened, but she heard not his breathing, nothing but the beating of her own heart. She laid her hand upon his shoulder, and pushed him gently.

“‘Father, it is time to rise!’ said she, in a low voice, and then the loud shriek, which burst from her lips, echoed through the tower, and roused from their slumber the two babes, who ran crying towards her.

“‘The body of her father had yielded to her touch, and had sunk forward into the fire-place, where it lay upon the hearth, among the cold ashes. It was evident that he had been dead for many hours, and, in her fright, poor Jeanne, scarcely knowing what to do, seized the little Marguerite in her arms, and ran screaming from the tower, nor paused until she reached the town, where instantly, with a prudence and foresight beyond her years, she went to seek the curé. Great was the excitement among the peasantry on the estate when they heard of the death of the Count de St. Remy, and they assembled in great numbers around the old tower, and bore away the body to the chapel of the château. But the hard-hearted *fermier-général*, well aware that his possession of the estate was illegal—for the count had not the power to dispose of the land, which belonged of right to his children after him—refused to receive the corpse, and it remained for two whole days outside the chapel door, whence it was carried to the burying-ground of the village, where it was thrown without ceremony,

still covered with the rags in which he had died, into the common fosse,—the curé having refused the prayers of the church to one who had died without its aid, consequently in a state of *impénitence finale*.

“After the death of her father, Jeanne, still, as usual, accompanied by her little brother, and carrying her sister on her back, set off on foot for Paris, with the papers which proved her descent from Henry II., and which constituted her whole worldly store, all soiled and ragged, sown up in her tattered *casquin*. In this plight did she traverse the whole of France, a distance of nearly two hundred leagues, with no support by the way, but from the charity of travellers, until she arrived at the last stage of her journey, within one league of the capital. She declared that, on that memorable day, she had walked more than twenty miles, with the determination of arriving at Paris before nightfall; but here, just at the very moment of seeing her hopes realized, she sank exhausted by the roadside, unable to move a step farther. Her feet were torn and bleeding, and she was drenched to the skin; the rain, which had fallen in torrents during the whole afternoon, had rendered the roads so slippery, that her fatigue had been doubled; added to which, she had scarcely tasted food since morning, for she discovered that, as she drew nearer to the capital, travellers were possessed of sterner feelings; they either turned a deaf ear to her petition, or else laughed to scorn the terms in which it was couched.

“Night was coming on apace: it was impossible to remain till morning on the wet and muddy bank. Her heart was pierced by the wailings of her little sister, and the cries of her brother for food and warmth were most piteous. Once more did she call her courage to her aid, and essayed to walk, but she was too weak, and, staggering forward a few paces, fell with her head against a door in the wall, which ran along the footpath. The shock burst it open, and discovered to the astonished gaze of the poor famished children, a scene which appeared to them like fairy-land—a garden filled with blooming shrubs and flowers, and lighted by

myriads of coloured lamps. There was no one walking in the garden—the ground was too wet for that—but a few paces from the gate stood a Chinese pavilion, raised by a flight of steps from the ground, all decorated with party-coloured streamers, and blazing with light, within which was gathered a crowd of magnificently-attired ladies and cavaliers, and whence issued sounds of mirth and laughter, and strains of low, soft music. It was like a dream of heaven! Jeanne never could tell who among this gay company was the first to perceive the three little miserable wanderers, as they stood shivering at the gate, for she stood entranced, until she was brought back to reality by a loud voice shouting a coarse reprimand to a servant in rich livery, who was standing at the door of the pavilion, for having left the garden-gate unlocked. Presently the servant in rich livery came hurriedly down the steps, and taking Jeanne by the arm, was proceeding to turn her without ceremony into the road, when a sudden instinct caused her to resist the attack, and springing forward with a desperate effort, with out-stretched arms, she darted towards the pavilion, and called out in a piteous voice, in which the two younger children joined, as soon as ever they heard the first note, so familiar was the cry—“Charity—charity, for the love of Heaven! A morsel of bread for three poor starving orphans, *descendants of the royal house of Valois!*”

“In an instant the whole company rushed to the balcony which surrounded the pavilion, attracted by the piercing shriek of Jeanne and the novelty of the appeal. She had sunk upon her knees at the foot of the balustrade, awaiting in silence the success of her bold attack. For a moment it was doubtful, for the lacquey in rich livery had again got fast hold of the child’s arm, and in obedience to the same rough command which had sentenced her to a dismissal before, was about to push her again towards the gate, when suddenly a lady, one of the most richly attired among the company, calling to him in an authoritative tone to desist, and forcing her way through the crowd, came down the steps to where poor Jeanne was still kneeling, pale and trembling, with

her little brother clinging to her skirts, and the baby-sister wailing piteously at her back. The garden where this scene took place belonged to the magnificent château of M. le Marquis de Boulainvilliers, at Passy; the gentleman who had commanded the lacquey to turn the children from the gate was M. de Boulainvilliers himself, and consequently the lady who had desired him do so at his peril, could be no other than Madame la Marquise de Boulainvilliers!

“The fates had been kind indeed when they led poor Jeanne into the friendly domain of the marquise. I knew her well: she was, I believe, a truly benevolent person, but had perverted her real, honest, charitable disposition into a sickly sentimentality, by her intercourse with the Neckers, and her admiration of all the *fade* doctrines emanating from the academic grove established at Coppet. She was, moreover, “*folle de ce cher Jean Jacques, l’homme de la Nature, et citoyen de Genève*,” and raved about sentiment and presentiment, and the errors and vices of civilization, and the far more preferable state of savage life, and “the feelings implanted in our bosoms by the God of Nature,” &c.; until she, being rather a portly person, and always overlaced, would sometimes turn suddenly black in the face, and alarm her auditors by a desperate fit of coughing, which she owed to her asthma, and which was only quelled by the exertions of the two tall valets who stood behind her chair; the one patted her most vigorously on the back, while the other jerked cold water in her face from a glass ewer, which always stood ready at hand for the purpose. This is the only remembrance I have preserved of Madame de Boulainvilliers: but, slight as it is, it will be quite sufficient to show you all the extent of the good fortune which had befallen “the descendants of the royal house of Valois.”

“The marquise took the poor child by the hand and raised her from the ground, without any apparent fear lest the contact of such dirty rags should soil the coloured satin brocade in which she herself was attired. She spoke to her kindly, and endeavoured to soothe her

agitation, and finally led the whole party into the very midst of the assembly of dainty ladies and mincing cavaliers, and made them repeat the extraordinary appeal which had attracted her attention. Jeanne needed no pressing to induce her to comply with her request, and the music was hushed and the titling of the company silenced by the whining cry, "*Charité! Charité!*—a morsel of bread for the starving orphans of the royal house of Valois!"

"Curiosity was of course excited; the event had given variety to the amusements of the evening. Madame de Boulainvilliers questioned the child, who told her history in a plain and artless manner, and, when she had concluded, drew from the lining of her *casquin* the papers relating to her birth, which Madame la Marquise read aloud to the astonished assembly. There was a universal movement in favour of the orphans; a most liberal subscription was raised on the instant, everybody present proposed assistance in some way or another to get a *placet* presented to the king, and so great was the interest excited, that the worthy marquise hurried them away to bed, fearing lest some one else might rob her of her *bonne œuvre*, by taking charge of the children, concerning whom she had already formed a multitude of projects in support of her favourite theory. Here was a fine occasion for displaying the superiority of the philosophy of Jean Jacques! What good fortune to have discovered these children, fresh from the hands of nature, uncorrupted by intercourse with the world, and yet of noble, nay more, of royal blood! How she would love to show to the incredulous and scoffers at the new doctrines the wondrous effects to be produced by the new system of education—the candour, the innocence, the absence of all artifice, which characterise the human heart when untrammelled by the hypocritical conventions of society! She really was alarmed lest any of her friends should beg the children of her, and so ordered them to be put to bed in the apartment adjoining her own.

"'Had they not better have a hot bath first?' drily exclaimed the old Chevalier de Meylau.

“ ‘Fie, chevalier; there is no disgrace in their neglected state. In all artificial communities like ours, it is the seal affixed to poverty!’ exclaimed the marquise; indignantly.

“ ‘Ay, or the *soil*,’ retorted the chevalier; but fortunately the marquise did not hear him; she had been seized with one of her most desperate fits of coughing.

“ ‘Behold, meanwhile, the orphan mendicants, whose resting-place the night before had been a heap of filthy straw, beneath the manger of a cow-shed, reclining on a bed of down, beneath a velvet canopy!’ But Jeanne declared to us that she did not sleep a whit the sounder, so tormented was she the whole of that night with the fear that Madame de Boulainvilliers might keep and appropriate to her own use the title-deeds which she had imprudently suffered to pass from her hands, and which she had been used to regard as the means whereby she should one day be raised to a level with royalty itself. So much for the candour and innocence, and freedom from suspicion, upon which poor Madame de Boulainvilliers had reckoned so blindly!

“ ‘Once fairly established in the household of the Marquise de Boulainvilliers, the fortune of the children of the Count de Saint Remy changed from the lowest depths of misery to a state of ease and affluence, of which they could not even have dreamed. It appears, however, that the marquise, for some reason or other, very soon abandoned her darling project of rearing her little protégées *à la Jean Jacques*; for, after suffering them to run wild about her park at Passy, well-dressed but bare-foot, for some time, she procured the boy’s admission into the Ecole de Marine, despatched the little Marguerite to the care of a nurse in Burgundy, but retained among her dependents the lively Jeanne, always with the promise that she would prosecute her cause at court with the utmost vigour and perseverance, and declaring that she had no doubt of the ultimate success of her undertaking, for that Madame Elizabeth, with all the ardour and warmth of benevolence which characterizes youth, had promised to second her application to the

king. It was in the midst of this good will, and Madame de la Motte declared without any fault on her part, that, by a singular caprice, for which she could not account, and which, by the bye, she slurred over in rather an embarrassed tone, her protectress suddenly changed her manner towards her, and one day, having declared to her that it was considered in the society in which she moved, both imprudent and derogatory to retain in her family a person in the position of Mademoiselle de Saint Remy, announced to her that she had taken the necessary measures to place her with Madame Leclercq, the most famous *couturière* of the day in Paris!

“ ‘The astonishment and indignation of poor Jeanne, on hearing this sentence, can well be imagined, but there was no appeal. What right had she to complain, who had been taken from the streets but a short time before by the kindness of the marquise? Besides, there was some consolation still amid her trouble, for Madame de Boulainvilliers promised not to neglect her suit at court, and I really believe did continue to prosecute it with undiminished zeal. It appears that it was Monsieur le Marquis who had insisted upon the dismissal of Jeanne—for what offence remains a mystery--but there must have been a grievous cause of displeasure, I judge, by the hatred which existed between the pair, and which was not satisfied on the part of the marquis, even by the imprisonment and disgrace of his victim.’ ”

“Jeanne remained with the *couturière* for two long

* I have heard the circumstance of this dire offending variously discussed, but I believe the true version of the tale to run thus: Poor Jeanne, who had been afflicted by nature with an incurable curiosity, had discovered, in one of her barefooted rambles in the park at Passy, the entrance to the secret still which M. le Marquis de Boulainvilliers in common with many French noblemen of the time, worked illicitly, in defiance of law or justice, and from which many of them derived the principal source of the colossal fortunes which they possessed. With primitive simplicity, Jeanne kept her discovery a profound secret, but used to spend her time suspended by a branch above the hole in the mound of earth, which concealed, by a clump of brambles and wild barberries, the entrance to the passage which served for the descent to the unlawful hiding-place. Here she would remain for whole hours together, gazing down, and watching with interest and amusement the whole process of the conversion of good grain into liquor, never once betray-

mortal years, during which the marquise wearied every minister, every man in place, with prayers and *placets* on behalf of her *protégé*; and, at length, one fine day, she sent for her to meet her brother, whom she had not seen since his departure for Brest, and when she arrived, the lacquy in waiting introduced them both into the *salon*, filled with the highest company, as Monsieur le Baron de Valois, and Mademoiselle de Valois!

“ ‘Madame de Boulainvilliers had prepared the scene—she expected tears of gratitude and *élans* of sentiment—but she was disappointed: the boy drew back, abashed at the novelty of his situation, and Jeanne uttered not a single word, but fainted! From this hour did a change take place in her character; her real nature, stirring and ambitious, now began to show itself without disguise; the years of rags and starvation were forgotten, as likewise the humiliation of her days of toil and labour with the *couturière*. She had but one drawback—the

ing herself by the slightest exclamation or gesture to the poor fools who worked on below, little supposing they were thus overlooked and noted.

The day of reckoning arrived at last; the chateau—the park—the gardens of Passy, were one morning filled with the emissaries of the police; every closet and cellar underwent a thorough scrutiny; the servants were strictly examined; but M. de Boulainvilliers laughed to scorn every attempt at detection; for he alone of all the household was in the secret of the illicit still. Disappointed and confused, the officers were retiring to report upon the fruitlessness of their errand, when Jeanne came bursting into the apartment, exclaiming, ‘I know where it is—I know it—this way, gentlemen—this way!’ To think of all this trouble, when I knew it so well! How fortunate I should have just been told what it was you were seeking! Come along, I will show you the still. How strange that Monsieur le Marquis should not have known that it was in the park! but I will show him the nearest way. Oh, come along quick! it is in full glory at this very moment—the fire blazing—the sparks flying splendidly; *two* men were at the bellows when I left!’

The consternation, the rage, the terror which these words produced, cannot be described. M. le Marquis was hurried off to prison, amid the laughter of the officers and the sobs and tears of the marquise; while poor Jeanne received, with astonishment, the furious kicks and cuffs of the marquis, instead of the thanks and praises to which she deemed herself entitled. From this hour the marquis, who had ever hated the child, vowed most bitter vengeance against her, and, on his leaving prison, commenced his system of persecution, which ceased not until he had contributed to bring down his victim to the lowest depths of desolation and infamy.

insufficiency of the pension allotted by the government, until the estates in Dauphiné and the châteaux in Brittany, and the forests in Maine, belonging to the title, and upon which the crown had seized in former reigns, were restored to her family,—when she might move with the splendour becoming her rank, and take her place among the princesses of the blood-royal, as be-seemed her name and descent. The pension was of eight hundred livres only per annum—a pittance barely sufficient to enable her to clothe herself with decency; but again did Madame de Boulainvilliers, the tried friend, come to her assistance, and, proud of her work, of having by her exertions caused the title to be recognised, now offered to pay her board in some convent, which she had refused to do so long as she was only poor Jeanne de Saint Remy.

“ ‘She retired then to a convent at Bar-sur-Aube, her native place, where she captivated the affections of the Count de la Motte, a young man of excellent family but small fortune, and they were soon afterwards married; and, with this auspicious event, *her* romance, like many others, might have been supposed to be concluded. But, alas, for her! there was yet a second volume. When I saw her, as I have described to you, at the Hôtel Cardinal, she had come to Paris to prosecute her suit with the ministers for the restoration of her estates. She was supported by the powerful interests of the Rohans. She was of a bold, enterprising, ambitious nature, fearless and intriguing, with friends at court devoted to her cause; and yet it will to this day excite a certain suspicion in my mind whenever I think of all the circumstances which followed—she never could gain access to the queen!’

“ ‘It is said that Marie-Antoinette had, in reality, the greatest desire to converse with her, but was prevented from receiving her by the express command of his majesty, who had conceived the most invincible dread of her presence near the throne, from having been told of her extraordinary powers of fascination. He had a great horror of this species of character about the queen;

and Madame de la Motte had already acquired (it seemed with great injustice *then*) the reputation of a troublesome, ambitious *intrigante*. Like all persons of indolent temperament, Louis Seize ever felt a mortal dread of stirring, active people. Infirm of purpose himself, he disliked those who were resolute and steady in the accomplishment of their designs; therefore his aversion to Madame de la Motte would not have been remarkable, had it not been for the very perseverance which it gave him occasion to exercise—perhaps the only instance of tenacity he ever displayed—for he resisted on this occasion the prayers and entreaties of the queen, and the supplications of Madame Elizabeth. Nothing could soften him, and, when pressed to give a reason for this steadiness of hatred, he could not tell—*c'était plus fort que lui!*

“Of course, the enemies of royalty and the partisans of Madame de la Motte did not fail, in after times, to lay this preconceived antipathy on the part of the king to the score of avarice, and to the dread he most naturally felt at the prospect of being compelled to resign the magnificent estates and royal privileges of the Valois to the legal claimants. If the suspicion had been just, he certainly would not have admitted their claim to the title at all. He might have resorted to delay, or have avoided the recognition altogether. As it was, however, the affair certainly displayed want of tact, and great mismanagement, in the allotment of the pension. Either the claim set forth by the Saint Remys was an imposture, and should have been treated with contempt, or it was just, and, when once recognised as such, should have been met with the liberality and consideration which it deserved. This first error was most bitterly expiated, and Louis Seize must often have mourned most grievously over the want of consistency and false economy of his ministers

“I cannot help thinking that a more liberal allowance, by rendering unnecessary all the struggles for existence which Madame de la Motte was compelled to make, might have deadened her ambition, and she might

have spent her days, satisfied to display her love of intrigue, and exhibit her powers of fascination, on the restricted theatre of Bar-sur-Aube, her husband's birth-place and her own, to which she was much attached, and which she herself declared she never would have left, had not her presence been considered necessary in Paris, so long as there was hope that the estates might be restored to her family. Every one who knows the sequel of her history must remember that (supposing her to be guilty) it was the affection she bore to her native place, which was the ultimate cause of her ruin; for, had she followed the advice of friends, and fled to England immediately, she might have been saved. But no—how *could* she leave the country without taking one last farewell of her beloved Bar-sur-Aube?—one of the ugliest places, by the bye, throughout the whole of France.

“ I have told you the story which I heard from the lips of Madame de la Motte herself, at the Cardinal de Rohan's table, and I again say that I believe most of the particulars to be strictly true, although they differ in some points from the tale she afterwards told in her memoirs. But therein she might have been influenced by many motives in the recital, whereas with us she was evidently governed but by one—that of exciting as much interest as possible in the breast of the Princesse de Guéménée; for, of course, the cardinal had already heard the story many times before, and I was reckoned as nothing. In itself the history is undoubtedly a most touching one; but when told as I then heard it, by the heroine herself, with the most expressive action, the most varied intonation, and *real* tears, the effect was irresistible, and I then understood, without further explanation, the fascination in which she held the cardinal, and which had excited my wonder and disgust but so short a time before. Even the princess herself, with all her preconceived aversion, was subdued at length, and before she took her leave, graciously invited the countess to meet at supper on the following evening a party of friends, among whom were some whose acquaintance

might facilitate the prosecution of her suit. Among others, I perfectly remember that she named M. de Crosne, *lieutenant de police*. Little did the poor countess dream, when her eyes flashed such proud triumph even on *me*, that the time would come when she would be favoured with many and many an unsought interview with M. de Crosne, in the Bastile, and that from his lips would she have to listen to the repetition of the sentence which condemned her to the most ignominious fate that could in our country befall a woman.

“I know not by what chance, on my taking leave of the cardinal for the night, his Eminence happened to mention the name of my mother; but suddenly the whole demeanour of Madame de la Motte was changed towards me, upon learning that I was the son of the Countess de Talleyrand, *dame du palais* to the queen, and she began immediately to *agacer* me with her attentions, with as much determination as she had before avoided even a glance in my direction. She turned, all smiles and affability, to inquire if I had a carriage in waiting to convey me to my residence, and, on my replying in the negative, insisted on my taking the vacant seat in her own, to which I most willingly assented. It was during the short drive from the Hôtel Cardinal to the Place Dauphine, where she resided, that I was enabled to judge more fully of her extraordinary vivacity and tact, and above all, of her wonderful aptitude for business; for, before we parted, she had extorted from me a promise to induce my mother to present her statement to the queen, which promise I religiously kept, although I obtained nought but a flat refusal for my pains, followed by many a bitter reproach for meddling with the affairs ‘of this *aventure*.’ This was the first and last time I ever beheld the countess: and, when she became a public character through her participation in the affair of the necklace, I had reason to rejoice that such was the case, for had she but imagined that I was fit to serve her purpose, I feel that it is not unlikely I might have lost the right of regarding with scorn the infatuation of the cardinal prince. So great was the power of will possessed by

this woman, that there must have been inordinate self-conceit in the man who would have dared to pretend to defy it.' ”

“What was the opinion of M. de Talleyrand concerning the affair of the necklace? Did he believe Madame de la Motte really guilty of the theft?”

“Much less than is supposed by the public, and certainly infinitely less so than her condemnation purported. I once ventured to ask him if he knew any of the particulars connected with this extraordinary business, and his reply, although guarded, gave me a suspicion that, although he did not believe her innocent, he felt convinced that her guilt was shared by some whose birth and influence near the throne shielded them from exposure.

“‘There is a degree of mystery throughout the whole transaction,’ replied he, in answer to my inquiries, ‘which is, perhaps, destined never to be cleared up. Had Madame de la Motte possessed the cunning of the arch-fiend himself, she *could* not have been guilty of one-tenth part of the baseness which was imputed to her in the act of accusation; there were impediments both social and commercial to many of the manoeuvres, which were *proved* against her on her trial. You can form no conception of the excitement produced by this event. The whole kingdom was divided for her sake into two sects, the unbelieving and the credulous; those who believed her guilty, and those who *knew* her to be innocent. For myself, I have heard so much on both sides, that my opinion is scarcely stable even now. It is a singular fact that all the persons who visited her were fully convinced of her innocence, and fought like lions in her defence.

“‘The Abbé de Kel, the almoner of the Bastille, and confessor of Madame de la Motte, told me himself, that his firm opinion in the case was this: ‘That, had she not been unfortunate enough to have already obtained the recognition of her title, she would not have been *condemned*.’ Monsieur de Breteuil, the great enemy of the cardinal, and favourite of the queen, was most active

in procuring materials to inculcate this unfortunate woman, and this circumstance having got abroad, greatly contributed to excite suspicion against Marie Antionette. But the circumstance which in reality formed the basis of her ruin, was the denial of the cardinal that he had ever furnished her with money. *This must have been false*, for, long before her arrest, she was living in splendour, had an hôtel in the Place Dauphine, with servants and equipages, was richly attired, and covered with jewels, and all this, forsooth, upon her husband's limited income, and her own pittance of eight hundred livres! I remember being told that the furniture of her hôtel equalled in richness that of the palace at Trianon. Mention was made of polished steel mirrors, set in gold, and of a famous bed, the hangings of which were worked in seed pearl, which was bought for an enormous sum by Madame du Barry, the late king's mistress.

“Another mystery, which completely baffles all speculation, is the total disappearance of the necklace itself, the object of all this turmoil. It was a jewel so well known among the trade in Paris that every single stone would have been recognised. There was scarcely a person of any note in the capital who had not seen it, as it had lain at Boehmer's, the jeweller's, for more than a year, open to the inspection of any one who chose to ask for the sight of it. I recollect having seen it not a long while before it created so much disturbance. Boehmer had been employed to furnish the wedding jewels for one of my relations, and the morning that he came to deliver them, he brought the necklace for us to view, as a curiosity. Neither in the workmanship nor the size of the stones did it give any notion of the immense value which was set upon it. I believe, however, that this consisted in the stones being all brilliants of the first water, and, as a collection, the most perfect and free from blemish (so Boehmer told my aunt) in the whole world.

“There is one more story connected with the jewel, which greatly complicates the mystery of the whole transaction, and which is known but to few persons. During the time that I held the Portefeuille of Foreign Affairs,

I received a letter from our ambassador at one of the northern courts, wherein he announced to me, with great excitement, the arrival at his court of the Count de M——y and his wife. They had been presented by himself to the sovereign; for, although they might, strictly speaking, have been considered *émigrés*, not having returned to France during the reign of Napoleon, yet, as the count was not at that time the head of his family, and had never meddled in politics, he had a right to claim the protection of the ambassador of his country. The lady had chosen for her *début* at court the occasion of a royal birthday, and she had made her appearance laden with all her jewels, and, “upon her neck,” wrote the baron, “she wore a necklace of the exact pattern of that, concerning which all Europe had been roused before the revolution—that is to say, the only difference being, that the three scroll ornaments which are so remarkable, and to which I could swear as being the same, are held by a chain of small rose diamonds instead of the *rivière*, by which they were joined before.”

“The letter gave us all great diversion at home, from the excitement in which it was written; but the emperor, to whom I of course communicated the fact, took it more gravely, and begged me to ask for a drawing of the necklace, which the ambassador found means to obtain, and which was found to correspond with that preserved among the *pièces du procès* in the Archives; moreover, on its being submitted to young Boehmer, he declared his full and entire conviction that the jewel was the same, from the remarkable circumstance of a mistake having occurred in the execution of the middle ornament, one side of the scroll containing two small diamonds more than the other, and which he remembered had much distressed his father, but which could never have been discovered save by a member of the trade. It was then remembered, and by the emperor himself first of all, that the lady’s mother had been attached to the person of Marie Antoinette, and that she had retired from court and gone to reside abroad soon after the trial of Madame de la Motte!

“So you see there is another link in the chain of evidence which historians, when writing any future history of the Diamond Necklace, would do well to examine.

“Louis Dixhuit was evidently aware of the history, for I remember once being struck with a conversation reported to me by the Marquis de F——. The young Count de B——, one of the most notorious *bêtes* at court, said one day in the presence of the king, “I wonder why the M——y family do not come back to claim their hereditary charges at court? What pleasure can they find in the horrid country they have chosen?—I could not live there for a single hour.”

“‘Perhaps you could not,’ retorted Louis Dixhuit, in his penny-trumpet voice, and with his childish titter, ‘but the Count de M——y *can*,—for it is a woody country, and unlike France, *on y brûle la bûche et jamais LA MOTTE*.’

“The Marquis de F—— had applied to me to know the meaning of the pun. The ambassador’s letter immediately flashed on my memory, but I did not choose to have the affair discussed with my name, so held my peace.

“This is all the information I could ever obtain from the prince,” added C., in conclusion, “concerning the *fameur collier*; but this last anecdote so excited my curiosity, that I immediately set to work and procured every pamphlet of note which had been written on the subject, and, by the help of this new light, was enabled to penetrate much of the darkness by which the affair is enveloped to the generality of the world. If you take any interest in the matter, it is really worth your while to do the same. What is still further worthy of remark is the fact that the family of the lady in question did not return to France even after the Restoration, and have continued to dwell abroad ever since. The name is one of the highest in France, and it excites astonishment to find it enrolled in the service of a foreign country.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUC D'AIGUILLON AND MADAME DUBARRI—TALLEYRAND'S RETURN FROM AMERICA—CHÉNIER, MADAME DE STAEL, AND MADAME DE LA BOUCHARDIE.

"You have begun, *malgré vous*," said I to C., the next time we met *tête-à-tête*, "the *vie anecdotique* of the prince, which I have always felt sure would prove so full of interest. Your strange story of Madame de la Motte is quite sufficient to excite curiosity in those who love to see the *truth* established where prejudice and falsehood have reigned so long. It would be a curious study to follow in the same manner, step by step, the life of the Prince de Talleyrand, and give to those who seek for *truth alone* (and they are many) the real impressions made upon a powerful organization, like his own, by the wondrous changes in which he bore so conspicuous a part; the conduct of those with whom he co-operated in the great reform which, from the very outset of his career, it is evident he had at heart; and his own conduct with regard to the confederates with whom the strange circumstances amid which he found himself compelled him to associate sometimes, '*malgré lui et à son corps défendant*.'"

"It would be difficult," replied C., "to destroy prejudices which have taken root. Mankind in general

cling to them with tenacity, and adopt ready-formed opinions with the greatest facility in proportion as they are improbable and absurd. The Prince de Talleyrand has been the victim of many such errors. From the great reserve, partly natural to his character, and no doubt strengthened by his clerical education, the motives by which he was guided, unexplained by himself, have been left to the interpretation of the mass; and the mass will ever be loath to yield conviction save to the evidence of facts alone. One of the most extraordinary delusions which exist in the public mind with regard to the prince, founded I should think upon no better authority than a brutal attempt at wit made by Napoleon, has been often adopted as a basis for the judgment of his character. ‘Kick Talleyrand behind,’ said the coarse-minded *sabreur*, ‘and look in his face, you will perceive no indication of any sense of the insult.’ The *dictum*, which was first uttered by the chattering buffoon of a Parisian *salon*, has been gravely quoted by more than one historian, and has in many cases gone forth as the standard whereby to judge one of the proudest characters that the Almighty ever sent among mankind!

“Again—how often has he been accused of participating in the murder of the Duc D’Enghien: though his whole life disproves the accusation. What single action of his long career can justify this supposition? His aversion to bloodshed—his avoidance of all violent measures—his forgiving temper, which was constitutional—all tend to combat the suspicion: and yet it has been greedily received, not only by his enemies, but even by the writers least interested in the affair—those of foreign nations, strangers to party-spirit in French politics, and who may be supposed to be mere spectators of the struggle. I think M. de Talleyrand owes this unjust and offensive accusation entirely to the reserve he has always maintained with regard to this event. Had he been more explicit, had he ‘*spoken out*,’ in short, upon the subject, his vilest detractors would not have dared to affix this stain upon his name, while the panegyrists of his great contemporary would have hesitated

before the *proofs* which M. de Talleyrand can still produce. Although he even yet mentions with caution all the circumstances connected with this affair, which he himself calls '*déplorable*,' yet I have gathered enough to make the recital interesting to you, and in *tems et lieu* I will put you in possession of the facts; but as you wish me to proceed *par ordre de date*, they will find no place here. Accusation and defiance are contrary to the whole system of conduct of the prince. His forbearance towards his enemies would sometimes excite the indignation of Mirabeau, whose fiery soul gloried in attack, and scorned defeat, from which he rose with fresh venom and fresh vigour.

" 'One thing is needed to complete the character of Talleyrand,' said the giant, in despair at the mildness of the prince, 'he needs unjust imprisonment!' The secret of the whole existence of Mirabeau—of his success—his energy and defiance, may perhaps be found in this simple exclamation. Mirabeau might accuse Talleyrand of coldness and over caution; but it was left for the coarse mind of Napoleon to tax him with baseness and want of self-respect. Now I, who have lived in the intimacy of the prince for many years, and have been in the habit of observing the impression produced upon his temper by outward events, have arrived at the conviction, that it is the very excess of pride, of which Napoleon denied him the slightest portion, that destroys the otherwise perfect equilibrium of his character. I am a believer in the influence of *race*, and can respect the philosophy which tells us that the qualities of the soul are handed down through long generations as well as the features of the body. The proud motto of the sovereign counts of Perigord, adopted in the sixth century, was borne with justice by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, their descendant: *Ré que Dieu!* In the old Perigord language, 'NO KING BUT GOD!'

"Would not the simple utterance of this haughty device form an argument against the accusation of 'versatility of opinion,' of 'change of masters'? The parallel might be carried further still, down to the

famous Cardinal de Perigord, friend and confidant of Petrarch, he who is called in Italian history the pope-maker, who in the twelfth century was the nominator of four different pontiffs, and then dethroned the Emperor Louis V. to crown in his stead Charles IV. He, too, was the most able diplomatist of his time, and was deputed to London to negotiate the ransom of the French King John. He succeeded in reducing the ransom, and in obtaining a truce, by the influence of his '*langue miellense et dorée*,' as says the quaint old chronicler of the time.

"Henri de Chalais might have saved his life had he but spoken the one word of supplication to his master. 'The king has said that he will pardon you if you will but sue,' said his good old confessor the night before his execution. 'What prevents you, then, Monseigneur, from asking?'"

"'The blood of the Talleyrands!'" said the prince, and, turning to the wall, spoke no more that night.

"You see they have ever been a taciturn and haughty race, faithful to the battle-cry of their fierce forefathers. '*Ré que Dieu*' must have been graven on their hearts, as well as painted on their banner. Did it never occur to the hard mind of the emperor, that Talleyrand might be insensible to insult from *contempt* of the aggressor? But come, I am wasting time in theory, and you, I am well aware, prefer facts and example.

"The political career of Prince Talleyrand may be said to have begun at his very entrance into life. I have given you a sketch of his childhood—to detail the events of his youth would be to give the history of the close of the eighteenth century. I have heard him say often that few men could boast of having passed through life as he had done—always in a crowd, having to elbow his way through the thickest ranks. During those early years he cannot remember to have enjoyed or experienced a single week's solitude. Always in a crowd, and that crowd composed of all that was celebrated at the time for wit, fashion, and beauty, by his own merit he was continually in advance; and, long before the age

when other men enter the lists, he had already travelled far on the road to fame and fortune. It is this circumstance which makes his age for ever a subject of dispute. His name has been so long before the public eye, in connexion with those of individuals who had begun their career so many years before him, that it seems as if he himself belonged to another epoch than our own. At the age of twenty-six, when he was named *agent-général* of the clergy, he had already acquired the conviction that the society amid which he was born was tottering to its basis, and, moreover, that it was unworthy of an effort to save it from destruction. I remember being much amused by his description of the very first visit he paid after being invested by his uncle with the title and power of his new office, which, at the time, was one of great trust and influence, and one which demanded great industry and talent.

“ He was one day *en confidence* with me, and, mentioning several events of the last century, ‘How has that poor *siècle* been calumniated,’ said he, gaily, ‘and yet, after all, I do not see that the *productive* power of your system equals that of the one you so much condemn. Where is the wit of your *salons*, the independence of your writers, the charm and influence of your women? What have you received in exchange for all these, which have fled for ever? Were I young, I should regret, and wish that I were old, to enjoy, at least in memory, the delicious *existence morale* of *my* time. I would not give the remembrance of those times for all the novelty and what you call *improvements* of the social system of to-day, even with the youth and spirit necessary to enjoyment. ’Tis true there were abuse and exaggeration in many of our institutions, but where is the system in which these do not exist? If our people was devoured with misery and taxes, yours is wasting to the core with *envy* and with discontent. Our *noblesse* was corrupt and prodigal, yours is *bourgeoise* and miserly—greater evils still for the prosperity of the nation. If our king had many mistresses, yours has many masters. Has he gained by the exchange? Thus you see it clearly demonstrated

that not one of the three orders has advanced in happiness by these wonderful *improvements* which you so much admire.'

"He joined good-naturedly in the laugh which I could not repress at his last regret, and I asked him if he had ever seen the *dernière maîtresse en titre du Roi de France*, Madame Dubarri.

" 'Frequently,' replied he, 'both before and after her disgrace, and, moreover, the last visit I ever paid her has been impressed upon my memory, by the circumstance of its being the first I made after having obtained the dignity of *agent-général du clergé*, which my mother had been soliciting for me so long. I had been the whole morning closeted with my uncle, listening to his various instructions and counsels relative to my new duties. So anxious was the dear good man to make me perfectly aware of the new dignity with which I had just been invested, that he had kept me for more than two hours standing before him. So strict was the clerical etiquette of the time, that he dared not request me to be seated in the presence of the two acolytes, who, by the law of that same etiquette, never left him, night or day, save when he himself was admitted into the presence of a superior.

" 'As you may imagine, both my strength and patience were exhausted before my dear uncle's allocution was over; and most heartily did I rejoice when he stretched forth his hand for me to kiss, in token of dismissal. He told me that he had much more to say (I shivered), but that he was anxious I should pay my respects to the minister that very day, as the neglect of such attention might bring disgrace and *défauteur* at the very outset of my career. I had just time sufficient to gain the minister's hôtel before the closing of his cabinet, so made all speed to quit my uncle's presence, glad to escape even with the prospect of another lecture.

" 'I was just descending the steps of the hôtel, when I met the young Duc d'Aiguillon, all excited and *ébouiffé* as usual, with his vest wide open, and his garments in disorder.

“‘Where are you going so fast?’ exclaimed he, seizing my arm.

“‘To call upon the minister, *mon ministre*,’ said I, laughing at the look of surprise with which he eyed me, and which betrayed plainly the troubled state of his intellect.

“‘*Parbleu !*’ exclaimed he, with the twinkling of the eye peculiar to persons in the same state of blessedness in which he then was, ‘and so am I going to call upon the minister. My coach is waiting at the corner, let us go together.’

“‘To this proposal I could of course offer no objection, being, as I tell you, horribly fatigued with my long *séance*, and having at that time no carriage of my own at command. We walked to the end of the street arm-in-arm together. He leaned upon me heavily, but was laughing heartily the whole way, as if inspired by some merry thought.

“‘You see me thus delighted,’ said he, suddenly stopping short, ‘at the remembrance of the glorious fun we have just been having at the Trois Marronniers. Why were you not there? We were but three, but diverted ourselves *comme quarante*. Liancourt was *en cerce*, and told some of his best anecdotes about—(he hiccupped slightly)—about Madame Dubarri! I should like to see that woman. Did you ever see her?’ He nodded assent in answer to his own question, and then, with a tipsy giggle, he pushed me in the side, exclaiming, ‘Well, then, jump into the carriage, and I will tell you all about her as we drive along to the minister’s.’

“‘He spoke some few words to his lackey, and seated himself beside me. The moment he entered, he drew down the blinds of the carriage, and, far from opposing such a measure, I was enchanted at what, in my own mind, I termed his discretion, as I thought that he was beginning to be aware of the state he was in, and was afraid of making himself the public gaze.

“‘The duke was one of the most witty men I ever met with. It would be difficult to find a more piquant

narrator than himself; and upon this occasion, the little *pointe de vin* which he had taken had awakened his imagination, and caused him to be even more lively and amusing than usual. His gaiety was contagious; and as he told one after the other the most *échevelé* anecdotes of the ex-favourite, all of the kind most likely to have been served up by M. de Liancourt for the entertainment of his dissolute companions, the peals of laughter which his recitals caused me to emit, rivalled his own in noise and duration. So absorbed was I in listening to his merry stories, and so diverted by his pleasant manner of telling them, that I did not perceive the tremendous rate at which the horses were going, nor the length of time which seemed to have been occupied in our short journey to the hôtel of the minister.

“Once, indeed, d’Aiguillon had stopped in the midst of one of his best narrations to draw aside the blind, exclaiming, ‘What, shall we never reach *ce diable de ministre*?’ and, after looking out, had thrown himself back with another of those comical laughs, in which I could not help joining with all my heart; but I was so much amused, and felt myself so extremely happy, that no suspicion entered my head concerning the direction we had taken, and my only fear began to be, lest we should arrive at our destination before his stock of anecdote was exhausted. In short, any one who had followed in our wake, and heard the peals of laughter which issued from the carriage, would certainly have thought me to have been as drunk as he. This mirth, however, at least as far as I was concerned, was destined to receive a tremendous check by the stopping of the vehicle, and the sudden appearance at the door, of the officer of *octroi*, who asked for the toll, which then it was the custom for all private carriages to pay on leaving the capital.

“‘Good God! where are we?’ exclaimed I, in alarm, now for the first time, since I had left my uncle’s presence, remembering the importance of the errand upon which I had been despatched, his earnest injunctions to use no delay in paying my official respects to the

minister, and the short space of time I had allowed myself to execute his command, even when I had first set out.

“‘At the Barrière des Bonshommes!’ returned the *employé*, slamming the door, and making the usual sign to the coachman that he might proceed.

“‘Before I had recovered from my astonishment, the carriage was again flying along the road, at the full gallop of the horses; and, while I was bawling myself hoarse, to induce the coachman to stop, again was d’Aiguillon roaring with laughter! I was by this time in a state of great vexation, which seemed rather to increase than diminish my friend’s merriment. In vain I pulled the check-string with all my might, and in despair leaned my body from the window to make myself heard by the grinning lackeys: my endeavours to arrest the progress of the carriage, seemed but to increase the speed at which we were going.

“‘‘Tis useless,’ exclaimed d’Aiguillon, drawing me back into my seat, ‘the varlets have *my* orders, and I am their master *ne vous déplaît*; besides,’ continued he, pulling out his watch, ‘your minister by this time is as far on the road to Versailles as we are on this: therefore, let us no longer trouble our heads about business, but give ourselves up to pleasure. I promise you as much satisfaction this evening from the remembrance of our trip, as your uncle would have promised you from the security of a good conscience. We are going to spend a delightful hour, so *en avant, et voquez la galère*.’

“‘It was in vain that I protested against the deception which he had played upon me. The hair-brained young scamp was too much excited with wine and merriment to listen to reason, and I, myself, could not long resist the influence of his piquant wit, his bon-mots, and comical descriptions, and gave way with all the good-will of youth and light-heartedness, to the mirth of the moment. I really imagined that he was taking me to some one of the delightful *petites maisons*, with which the environs of Paris abounded at that time, and that we should meet some of his joyous friends to spend the night, as it was

evident he had done the one preceding, in fun and frolic, with one or two of the choice spirits with whom he associated. Meanwhile the carriage went on with increasing rapidity.

“‘Where does your friend reside?’ inquired I—D’Aiguillon put his finger to his nose, winked and looked cunning, but said nothing. Ruel, Nanterre, Bougival, all were passed, and still we paused not.

“‘We are evidently going to St. Germain,’ thought I. ‘Well, ’tis of no consequence; the mischief is done, and nothing can save me now from the minister’s wrath and my poor uncle’s displeasure.’ But no—I was wrong. When we came to the bottom of the hill upon which is situated St. Germain, the carriage turned suddenly off the road to the left, and entered a fine avenue of chestnut-trees, at the end of which I could perceive a pair of lofty iron gates, and, just peering above the trees, the numerous chimneys and shining slates, of what appeared, at the distance, a tolerably-sized château. The adventure now assumed a different aspect; and I began to fear that, so far from the joyous party I had before anticipated, we were destined to swell the number of *convives* at the table of some rich old dowager *en retraite*, and that the treacherous kidnapping of d’Aiguillon was but a wily invention to diminish his own *ennui* by making me share in it.

“But the reproaches which I addressed to d’Aiguillon were unheard by him: for, having exhausted his stock of scandal, and being himself exhausted by the sleepless night he had passed, he had quietly folded his arms, and sunk back into a sound and heavy slumber; and, proceeding at the same rapid pace with which we had set out, up the avenue within the iron gates, we were soon before the *perron*. As the carriage stopped, I rubbed my eyes, scarcely able to believe my senses. Was I in a dream? Every object which presented itself to my astonished, horror-stricken gaze seemed familiar to my memory. The marble steps—the hedge of geraniums—the open vestibule with the porphyry columns—and now the doubt becomes certainty! The footman who comes with such agility

down the steps to assist us in alighting from the carriage, wears the livery of—I was in a perspiration from head to foot—of Madame Dubarri! Yes—the detestable *plaisanterie* of d'Aiguillon was now evident. He had brought me to Luciennes, and we were standing, four years too late, before the Pavillon. The trees had grown since I was there last, therefore I had not at first recognised the place.

“I was now really perplexed and angry, and by a violent shake awoke the Duke, who, torn thus rudely from his well-earned slumber, seemed even more astonished than myself. The door was open, the steps let down, and the gold-lace varlets waiting patiently our determination to alight. The situation was most embarrassing; there was a great deal of hurry and bustle in the interior of the Pavillon, a running to and fro in the vestibule, and a great calling of “Clarisse” and “Marianne.” It was evident that our arrival had been already perceived, and had already caused a certain sensation. I was determined, however, not to lend myself to the folly of my tipsy friend, and bade the coachman, in a peremptory tone, to use no delay in turning his horses, and conveying us back to Paris: although, feeling myself compelled, from the courtesy due to the fair sex, much against my inclination, to give some token of my visit, I left my name, with inquiries after the health of Madame la Comtesse, and regrets that business in Paris prevented my alighting to pay her a visit in person. To this d'Aiguillon, who had been sleeping off, in some degree, the fumes of the past night, offered no objection. He had, no doubt, recovered his senses sufficiently to perceive that he was not in a fit state, either *au moral* or *au physique*, to appear before the lady, and therefore, to my great delight, remained silent. We had once more gained the great gate of the park, and were waiting while the *conciERGE* was opening it to let us pass out, when we were overtaken by one of the countess's pages, who came running, panting and breathless, to request, on the part of his mistress, as a great favour, that we would return, as she would be

quite unhappy at the idea of losing my visit. Of course there was no possibility of refusal, and we were forced to turn back, myself in no very pleasant mood, as you may imagine, and even d'Aiguillon, whose impudence equalled that of Don Juan himself, rather subdued as the moment of trial drew nigh.

“We were ushered into a saloon on the ground-floor, looking into the garden, where Madame Dubarri was waiting with evident impatience. I was indeed quite overcome, almost to embarrassment, by the eagerness of welcome with which she received me, and the evident delight with which she accepted the introduction of my young friend. Poor Dubarri! the days were gone when her *salons* were crowded with the *élite* of the court, when her boudoir was the rendezvous of all that was elegant and *distingué* in the capital. The solitude in which she lived at the Pavillon, for which she was so unfit, formed a strange contrast to the crowded gallery at Versailles, where I had seen her last.

“No individual has ever been more calumniated than the poor, unhappy Dubarri. In most of the histories of “My own Times,” the “*Mémoires pour Servir*,” and the “*Souvenirs*” of M. This and Madame That, which have been vomited from the press during the last fifty years, she has been accused of every vice, of every crime that perverted human nature is capable of committing. Nothing was ever more unjust than these accusations. She had never forgotten, even amid all her grandeur, her ancient calling, and always felt a weight of *ennui*, of which she complained openly, with the greatest *naïveté*, at the pomp and ceremony which surrounded her at Versailles; and, above all, at the obsequious homage of which she was the object. She had succeeded in debasing her royal lover to her own level; but she was without ambition, and never sought to raise herself, or to use the influence she had acquired over the mind of the king for wanton mischief or malice. In the king’s cabinet, in his council-cabinet, or in the *galerie des glaces*, when assisting the king in his reception of foreign ambassadors, she was always the same

"*Jeanne la Folle, de chez la Mère Morry.*" She had remained in everything the very type of the successful members of the unfortunate class from which she had been taken. Violent and vindictive against those who offended her, her wrath was speedily forgotten in the more powerful passion for amusement and pleasure, which seemed, like a very demon, to have possession of her soul. Night and day, from sunrise to sunset, was she ever ready for a noisy game, or a brawling dance.

"I think it must have been her very indifference to the political intrigues going on at court, which caused her to maintain her influence so long. Louis Quinze was weary of the propriety of demeanour and great talents of Madame de Pompadour, and was glad, for the sake of variety, to *encadrer* his royalty with the representation, such as poor "*Jeanne la Folle*" could give to the life, of the habits and manners of a class of persons of whose existence he ought scarcely to have been aware. One great justice ought to be done to her memory—she was no hypocrite. She never sought to play the fine lady, or to assume the airs and state of the *noblesse*. On the contrary, her great delight was in talking of the *happy* days of her youth. I have heard from those who were admitted to the private *réunions* in the *petits appartemens* at Versailles, that no actress ever possessed greater flexibility of histrionic power than Madame Dubarri. Her talent at mimicry and caricature would have done honour to any stage, and it was one of the king's greatest enjoyments to listen to her description of the scenes and circumstances with which she had been familiar, before the happy chance which opened to her a life so different from that to which she then aspired. It seems that her comic powers were so great, that the satiated and *ennuyé* old king was once known to take a brilliant ring from his finger in the enthusiasm of the moment, and place it on her own, and, forgetting the presence of the courtiers, kiss her heartily on both cheeks, after one of these representations, at the same time declaring that she had given him more

pleasure than he had ever received from the best actors of the Comédie Française.

“ ‘ She alone furnished the amusement of the royal *petits soupers* for many years, and, while the people imagined that the king had retired for a while from public affairs, for the benefit of his health, and to recruit his strength, before entering on the great measures of reform which he had so long proposed for the advantage of the nation, roars of laughter and lewd songs were heard by the sentinel on duty at the gate of Trianon, issuing from the royal retreat, and making him imagine that he was pacing before one of the unholy dens which infest the narrow streets of the Quartier de la Cité.

“ ‘ Six years had elapsed since I had seen Madame Dubarri. I found her but little altered in appearance, and much subdued in manner—she was humbled to the very soul. It was evident that she was perishing with *ennui*, not with regret for the splendour in which she had lived, nor the power which she might have possessed, had she so willed, but for the gay and gallant company she had enjoyed, the laughter, the practical jokes, the *guerre pampou*—a game which she had introduced, and which was still played at court, although she was no longer allowed to be there to share in the mirth which it excited. Her lamentations at her *délaissement*, as she called the comparative solitude in which she lived, were at first most piteous; but, as of old, her griefs were soon forgotten in the delight of the moment, and she soon gave way, with all the frankness and *bonhomie* of her character, to the unwonted delight imparted by the visit of two persons who could give her news of the court, and of what was said and what was done among those whom, so short a time before, she had ruled as queen, but whom she could not now either bribe or flatter into the slightest demonstration of courtesy.

“ ‘ You are, no doubt, curious to hear an opinion of Madame Dubarri’s beauty from the lips of one who has seen her both in the days of her prosperity and after her downfall. She was a person of small, almost diminutive

stature, extremely frail and delicate in feature, which saved her from being vulgar; but, even from the first, she always wore that peculiarly *fané* look, which she owed to a youth of dissipation, a maturity of unbounded indulgence. At the period of my visit, she was about six-and-thirty years of age, but, from her child-like form and delicacy of countenance, appeared much younger, and her *gambades*, and unrestrained gestures of supreme delight, on having, as she said, *quelqu'un à qui parler*, did not seem displaced. Although alone, and evidently not in expectation of visitors, her toilet was brilliant and *recherché*, the result of the necessity of killing time. The portrait, which is popular from the engraving, in which she is represented sipping coffee, is the best resemblance of her which has ever been attempted, and the likeness was most striking on this day, from her being attired in the same style as that represented in the picture. I could see that d'Aiguillon was charmed, and in spite of the clouds through which his reason had to make its way, he behaved in a discreet and gentlemanlike manner.

“ ‘ It really was a curious day, that 16th of August, 1780—begun in the drawing-room of the Archbishop of Rheims, listening on bended knee to the exhortations of the good and pious prelate, and finished in the boudoir of “Jeanne la Folle.” It might be taken as the very type of the chaos which, from one end to the other of the social system, existed at the period. I was impatient to return to Paris, and did not wish to prolong my visit, but the poor comtesse sued so earnestly for another and another *petit quart d'heure*, that I had not the heart to hurry away. She showed us, with great complacency, all through the grounds belonging to the Pavillon, which were really beautiful, particularly the *jets d'eau* and the artificial fountains which decorated the gardens; and there was something particularly touching in the tone in which she spoke of the kindness of poor “France” (the name by which she still designated the late king), who had caused the water-works of Marly to be brought down to the Pavillon, in order to give her a pleasant surprise on her birthday. Their removal must have cost

several millions of the public money, but what was that compared to the pleasure of winning a smile of delight from "Jeanne la Folle!"

"On returning to the Pavillon, we found a splendid collation spread in the saloon. Here was the vantage ground of the Comtesse Dubarri; no one could better do the honours of a well-served table. In vain we excused ourselves upon the plea of our *negligé* toilet. She would take no refusal, saying, with a sigh, "I excuse you with all my heart; and fear not, we are sure to be alone; there is no danger of intrusion from visitors."

"It was impossible to resist the melancholy tone in which she uttered the words: and, moreover, d'Aiguillon was not proof against the assurance which she gave him that she would make him judge of the Tokay which King Casimir sent as a present to Louis XIV. So we yielded to the gentle violence of the comtesse, and consented to remain. We were both well rewarded for the good deed, each of us in the way most agreeable to himself—d'Aiguillon with plenteous libations of the most exquisite wine, and myself with stories and adventures of the court of Louis Quinze, which to me served as most precious *renseignemens*, and gave me the clue to much that has taken place in France since that time.

"As for Madame Dubarri herself, she soon turned from her lamentations concerning the behaviour of the young court towards her, to give herself up to all the merriment of the hour, and was soon excited by the good fellowship of d'Aiguillon, whose "discretion" had worn off with the first few glasses, and who had retrograded into the same state of hilarity as when he met me in the morning. I could not quote now one half of the *bon mots*, the puns, the *quolibets*, uttered during the course of that repast. It was a complete souvenir of the *régence*, and I could well understand that the influence which Madame Dubarri had possessed over the mind of the king had owed its origin to the nature of the *joyeux propos* with which her conversation teemed, and which to Louis Quinze must have worn the mask of originality, as it was not probable that he could ever have heard the like

before. I know not what hour of the night it could have been when we rose from table, of course much too late to think of returning home.

“ ‘ We adjourned to the boudoir of the comtesse—a delicious retreat which poor “ France ” had taken a pleasure in adorning with his own hands—and here the gaiety of the pair became even more uproarious. Madame Dubarri told us much of her past life, never sparing details which would have excited astonishment, even had she told them of another, but which, related of herself, became unaccountable. She showed us, among other curiosities which the boudoir contained, a little volume, richly bound in white silk, and which consisted of the manuscript journal of the king, during an absence of a few days that he was once compelled to make at Versailles, while she remained at Fontainebleau. By one of those curious chances, which I believe happen to all who *observe*, my eye fell upon a passage which immediately set at rest, in my mind, the long discussions and disputes which had been excited concerning the dismissal of M. de Choiseul from the ministry. It ran thus, and forget not, that it was in the handwriting of the king himself.

“ ‘ *Friday, 10th.*—Sent off the courier with the morning billet to you, *ma chère*, then arose. Looked from the window to see if the weather would be fine for the hunt. Saw on the wall of the *Cours des Veneurs* an impertinent allusion to somebody, chalked in letters large enough for me to read even at that distance. One of the *rabats de monte* must have been the perpetrator. Left my chamber in great anger. Found M. de Choiseul waiting in my study. Showed him the writing, took occasion to say (as much for himself, as in reference to the offence of which I complained) all the good I know (and it is not a little) of somebody. Wishing to anticipate all the malicious thoughts which I feared my unrestrained praise of somebody might give rise to in his mind, said, in conclusion, “ After all, the worst that can be said is, that I succeeded Saint Foix in her affections.” “ Exactly so, sire,” muttered Choiseul, “ just as your majesty suc-

ceded to King Pharamond, as sovereign of this country." I did not choose to speak further on this subject, so changed the conversation. Choiseul likes an innocent *plaisanterie*, but there is no harm in Choiseul."

"Upon what a slight thread will sometimes hang the destinies of men and of nations! Is it not evident that this "innocent *plaisanterie*," as it was called by the good-natured but obtuse Louis Quinze, was of the kind most likely to inflame the hasty, choleric temper of Jeanne la Folle. In my own mind, I feel perfectly convinced that it was this ill-timed joke of the minister which caused his disgrace, as I find upon reference to dates, that it was upon the king's return to Fontainebleau that the famous scenes of the oranges, "Saute Choiseul—Saute Praslin," was enacted, and both Choiseul and Praslin were disgraced. It was evident that the page had been often read, for it was worn, and the writing in some places dimmed, as if with tears. Perhaps it was this circumstance which had caused the book to open just at this very passage, and rendered me the involuntary shaver in a secret which is not generally known even to this day.

"After we had sufficiently examined all the curiosities and expensive baubles with which the boudoir was decorated, Madame Dubarri, whose dread of seeing us depart seemed to increase as the hours flew by, then insisted on displaying the jewels which "*ce cher France*" had given her on various occasions. It was, indeed, a splendid sight; but, when I complimented her upon the possession of the finest rubies I had ever beheld, she shook her head mournfully, and said with a sigh, that she would give them all for a few days participation in the rejoicings which were going on *there* (she pointed to Versailles,) not as she once had been, planner and promoter, but even as mere spectator. I asked why she did not seek forgetfulness in change of scene; why she did not travel. No, she could not tear herself away from the spot where she had reigned so long; she still had hope that the young queen would consent to receive her at court; she scarcely seemed to care upon what footing

she was admitted, so long as she were allowed to join in the gaieties and festivities which were going on, almost beneath her very eye, and from which she felt it such a misfortune to be thus excluded.

“ ‘Her emotion was but momentary, however; for, with the tears which the memory of the change in her situation had called up still in her eyes, she turned to my companion, and defied him to a game at *bilboquet*, declaring that she had, in former times, passed whole hours at this play with the king, who was passionately fond of it, but could never win when she was his adversary. D’Aiguillon readily consented, the *bilboquets* were brought, and more wine was served. In spite of the noisy rattle of the balls, and the noisier laughter and loud disputing of the players, I fell asleep, nor did I awake until daylight. To my astonishment, I found the comtesse and her host as eager and busy in the childish game as when they first began—not a whit fatigued, and seemingly disposed to continue for some hours longer. D’Aiguillon was by this time totally incapable of understanding my meaning when I warned him that it was time to go; and I withdrew unobserved, resolving to return alone to Paris, leaving him to finish the adventure as best he could.

“ ‘Just as I reached the gate, I perceived the royal hunt dashing down the side of the hill, and was glad to conceal myself behind the wall until the *cortège* had passed by, ashamed of being seen issuing from the dwelling of Madame Dubarri, although well aware that there was not one of those dainty courtiers, who now passed by with head averted and with eyes cast down, who had not thought it the greatest honour, but a short time before, to be admitted within the walls of that self-same Pavillon, which they seemed now to shun with such disdain. This circumstance would be too trifling to mention, were it not for the *moral* it contains; finer, because *true*, than all those which flourish just above the vignette at the close of the “*Contes Moraux*” of Marmontel, or those “*dédiés à la Jeunesse*” by Madame de Genlis.’

“ M. de Talleyrand paused, with that peculiar smile

on his countenance which those who live in his intimacy know so well, as being meant to fill the place of some satirical trait which he does not choose to utter at the time, but which is not wholly lost notwithstanding.

“Yes, this was the last time I ever beheld the Comtesse Dubarri, *ex-maitresse en titre*. As for d’Aiguillon, so enchanted did he seem with his new acquaintance, that, from that day forward, he spent a great portion of his time at the Pavillon; and, when I rallied him upon the attraction which seemed so irresistible, and reminded him of Ninon de L’Enclos and Diane de Poitiers, he shrugged his shoulders, and answered me with the greatest coolness—“*Que voulez-vous, mon cher?* where on earth could I go to get such exquisite Tokay as that which the old fool, King Casimir, sent as a present to Louis XIV.?” By this I judged, when his absences became less frequent, that the Tokay was drawing to a close, and when they ceased altogether, that it had totally disappeared. *Autre moralité!* as dear old Perrault has it at the end of his fairy tales.”

“The prince paused again more thoughtfully, and added, ‘Alas! it makes one’s heart ache to remember the sad fate which befel both of those gay, light-hearted individuals. The one died upon the scaffold for having sold her jewels (the jewels she had shown me with such pride as the gifts of poor dear “France”) to send the money which the sale produced to the *émigré noblesse*—that *noblesse* who had treated her with such scorn—with such contempt! The other met a death more frightful still—the gay, the witty, the high-born d’Aiguillon fled to Holland, and perished there, they say, of misery and starvation!’

“This souvenir of Madame Dubarri,” said C., “forms one of the prince’s favourite *nouvelles de boudoir*, as he gracefully calls these fugitive anecdotes with which his memory is stored. I have observed that, from his youth upwards, his heart has never softened towards the fair sex. I never heard him speak disparagingly of any woman, not even of those who, he is aware, have done him ill offices; while he is ever ready to allow that he

owed much of his success in early life to the kindness and protection of his female friends. They alone had tact and penetration enough to discover the future influence of the Abbé de Perigord; while their 'lords and masters' beheld in him nothing more than the blind tool of an insane and furious party. Madame de Staël, who was his first conspicuous protectress, inspired, notwithstanding this, far less gratitude in the mind of her *protégé* than the humble confederate with whom she leagued to obtain his pardon and recall, Madame de la Bouchardie. You will smile when I tell you, that even to this hour he cannot speak of this charming woman without emotion. I myself have heard his voice falter when he has mentioned her name. He loves to talk of her with those who still remember the matchless graces of her person, the exquisite sensibility and goodness of her heart.

"I shall never forget the reply he made one day to my foolish *banal* question of 'What kind of person was she?'

" 'You could no more understand what *kind* of person she was,' he replied, with a contemptuous smile, 'than I can comprehend the admiration you bestow upon the poor, vapid puppets with which your modern drawing-rooms are filled, or the influence you allow to the female *bourgeoise*, the wives and daughters of your bankers, and your *agents de change*, who, if admitted at all to the *salons* of the aristocracy of my day, would not occupy, as they now do, the high places, but those afar off, nearest the door. Any endeavour to make you understand the peculiar fascination of Madame de la Bouchardie would be useless; for you, in your generation, cannot have seen the like. She belonged to that class of women that followed the dowfall of the monarchy, whose manners and habits were far different from those of the charming marquises of the *ancien régime*, and were, perhaps, even more charming still. Born amid strife and contention, daughters of the revolution, their part was to calm excitement, to soothe the angry passions which had been aroused; and well did they fulfil

their gentle destiny. History will preserve the names of Madame Beauharnais, of Madame Tallien, of Madame Hamelin, not so much for their talents and courage as for their gentleness and influence in turning aside wrath, and saving the weak from the fury of the strong.'

"It is pleasant to listen to the praises of this fair and gentle creature from the lips of M. de Talleyrand, mingled as they are with the expression of the gratitude which time has not yet diminished towards her. The only *romantic* incident in the whole life of the prince is connected with Madame de la Bouchardie, and there lies, perhaps, the secret of the tenderness with which he remembers her: while the gratitude which he is *compelled* to feel towards her proud rival, Madame de Staël, has left him cold and unimpassioned. The latter, who, by her own confession, envied the grace she could not imitate, was bound by the ties of friendship to Madame de la Bouchardie, and disdained not to make use of her influence when occasion required; and often was her *amour-propre* severely wounded to find that those in power, who had been proof against her own blandishments, yielded at once, with scarcely an effort at resistance, to the wondrous fascination of Madame de la Bouchardie. The comtesse occupied at that time a small hotel, not far from the site of the Bastile, and here she sought to live in retirement; but this was soon discovered to be no easy matter for one whose name had already been immortalized in some of the most glowing verses in the language, and her *salon* soon became the rendezvous of all the wit and talent of the capital.

"The young General Buonaparte was one of her most ardent admirers; 'tis even said that she had precedence of Josephine Beauharnais in his affections. Her answer to his proposal of marriage is well known, and proves that she already felt a presentiment of his future greatness. 'No, general, you will advance too far for one like myself, who loves to remain stationary.'

"Joseph Chénier, the poet, the dramatist, the ardent republican, had also laid his talents and his triumphs at her feet, and it was upon his influence that Madame de

Staël had reckoned to obtain the recall from exile of M. de Talleyrand. It was a work of time and patience, and required all the power of the one, all the more powerful weakness of the other, to obtain even so much as a hearing for their bold demand. At length, the fair Eugénie had recourse to a graceful expedient, which had more effect than all the philosophical reasonings of her learned friend. It was the custom of Chénier to spend his evenings at the little Hotel d'Esparda, and there, in the society of the comtesse and Corinne, after a day spent in toil and strife, amid the loud uproar of the tribune, or the furious declamation of the club, would he love to *retremper son âme* and imbibe fresh inspiration for the composition of those splendid odes with which he has enriched our language. He was accompanied in these visits by his little dog, Stella, which had been a present from the comtesse, and knew her well. The little animal was in the habit of running on before her master to the hotel, where she would bark and scratch for the porter to open the gate, so that her master might not be kept waiting. Madame de la Bouchardie was aware of this, and, every evening, at the well-known signal which announced the approach of Chénier, she would seat herself at the harp and begin to sing the beautiful touching ballad of *Le Proscrit*. Her voice was most splendid, and she possessed great talent as a composer, having herself set to music many of those exquisite ballads written by Chénier's brother, André.

"This was the sure way to reach the poet's soul. She well knew that he stood without and listened to the end, not daring to enter while the fascination lasted. When at length the ballad was concluded, and Madame de la Bouchardie had risen from the instrument, she was sure to behold Chénier standing on the threshold, leaning against the doorway, with saddened countenance, and tears glistening in his eyes. It was then, while still beneath the spell of that heavenly strain, that he was greeted with the words which must at such a moment have sunk deep into his heart: 'Dear Joseph, what has been done to-day for M. de Talleyrand?' For some

time the devoted friends had to sustain discouraging refusals or embarrassed excuses on the part of Chénier, but the stern principles of the republican yielded at last to the generous perseverance of the comtesse, and one evening he was enabled to answer the accustomed question by the information that the Convention had consented to listen to the justification of citizen Maurice, and that he himself was appointed to plead the cause of the exile on the morrow. The whole evening was spent by the three friends in fixing what should be said, what arguments used, to move the pity of his listeners, most of whom were disposed against the measure which he was about to propose. The night passed away in the amicable discussion; so anxious were the trio not to lose a single advantage of argument which could be given in Chénier's speech.

“The keen wit of Madame de Staël and the fiery energy of Chénier were for ever coming in contact, and causing the whole fabric of the poet's intended *plaidoyer* to fall to the ground, after it had been raised with so much care and pains. Sometimes the gentle spirit of Eugénie would suggest some conciliatory word which would flatter the irritable self-love of both her friends, and soothe their wounded vanity, and again they would go on smoothly with their task until fresh cause of difference arose, and Eugénie was again appealed to. It was thus that, with these petty causes of delay, morning had arrived and no speech was prepared, and Chénier went forth to the tribune disheartened and discouraged at the unwonted sterility of his imagination, dreading, after all, that his own want of eloquence might cause the appeal in favour of M. de Talleyrand to be rejected by the assembly. He found the indefatigable friends already arrived, and waiting in the ante-room. Madame de Staël submitted to his judgment several new reasonings which had entered her mind since he had left her, but they found poor Chénier still cold and uninspired; and, as he turned to enter the *salon* where the members of the Convention were fast assembling, he said, in despair, ‘Pray for me, for I need it; I fear that I shall

have no success in this cause, though you have made it yours.'

"Madame de la Bouchardie approached and laid her hand upon his arm. She looked up into the face of the poet with a countenance bathed in tears. Chénier tried to tear himself away, but she still detained him, and, in a low, tremulous voice, fearful of being overheard by those beyond the door, she sang the opening couplet of the ballad which had first roused him to exertion for the sake of the exile. She saw by his heightened colour and his quivering lip that he was moved, and, as she proceeded with the song, her own emotion became more painful still. Just as she concluded, the bell, which summoned the assembly to silence and attention, was heard, and Chénier rushed into the hall with that powerful emotion still upon his soul. Before the last strain uttered by those sweet tones had died upon his ear, he had mounted the tribune, and without forethought, without preparation, gave utterance, in impassioned language, to one of the most brilliant appeals which had ever been pronounced before that stern, unpitying senate. Enthusiasm was roused; the motion, supported by Legendre and Boissy, was carried without a murmur, and citizen Maurice was declared free to return to France whenever it might suit his own pleasure. Madame de Staël, by her interest with Barras, certainly forwarded the measure, and she has reaped the fame, while Madame de la Bouchardie has gathered all the gratitude.

"The first visit of M. de Talleyrand on his arrival in Paris, was, of course, to Chénier, and it was agreed between them that they would proceed together that same evening to the little Hôtel d'Esparda, which no longer echoed with the prayers and lamentations of the two fair *soliciteuses*, but had once more resumed its tone of gaiety and *insouciance* ever since the successful termination of their efforts in favour of their absent friend. Chénier entered the drawing-room alone, requesting M. de Talleyrand to remain for a moment in the shadow of the doorway. By a little artifice he led the conversation to the subject of the exile, and both Madame de Staël and

her friend expressed anxiety and surprise that he had not yet arrived from Berlin. They complained of this delay, reproaching him with coldness and ingratitude in thus remaining so long in voluntary banishment.

“ ‘ Were he to hear your ballad of the “ Proscrit,” it would hurry his return,’ said Chénier to Madame de la Bouchardie, at the same time taking her by the hand, and leading her to the harp, and Eugénie, although declaring that the song was a *pièce de circonstance* and out of date, yielded to his entreaty that she would sing it; and, finding inspiration in the remembrances which the music called up, she gave it with all the impassioned energy which had before roused the soul of her lover to pursue with such unwearied perseverance the cause he had himself at first condemned. While she was singing, M. de Talleyrand had drawn near unperceived, and when her hand fell to her side at the conclusion of the *ritournelle*, he seized it in a transport of delight, and imprinted on those fairy fingers a fervent kiss of gratitude. The loud shriek of surprise uttered by Madame de la Bouchardie roused Madame de Staël from the reverie into which the melody of the voice of her friend never failed to plunge her. In an instant, the arms of both ladies, with the true republican *sans gêne* of the day, were around the neck of the happy ‘ Proscrit,’ and while Madame de Staël expressed with fluency all the joy she felt at again beholding him, the Comtesse de la Bouchardie shed tears of happiness, more eloquent in their silence than all the florid declamations of her friend. It would enchant you to hear the prince describe that scene, the mixture of the burlesque and the pathetic which he can paint so well.”

“ What became of Madame de la Bouchardie?” said L. “ Her name is never mentioned in the annals of that time, and yet it seems difficult to suppose that she could have sunk so completely into obscurity as to have left no trace. The friend of Buonaparte and Talleyrand, the mistress of Chénier, the companion of Corinne, must of necessity have been a personage of note, not a mere *comparse* to occupy the back of the stage.”

“Alas ! you should not have asked me this,” said C., mournfully. “It seems as if a curse hung over all that was fair and virtuous at that stormy time. There is a tale connected with Madame de la Bouchardie, of such frightful injustice, of such base ingratitude, that it would harrow up your soul were I to tell it. At Chénier’s death, she went to live on her estate, but was brought back to Paris, some few years ago, a confirmed, incurable lunatic. When the prince seems overcome by sadness, and calls for his carriage before the hour at which he is accustomed to take his daily drive, I know almost by instinct that Dr. F. has been closeted with him for some time—and I can easily guess who has formed the melancholy subject of their conference.”

CHAPTER X.

THE ABBÉ CERUTTI.

“THE sudden change from the frivolous *papillote* of the *ancien régime* to the sombre enthusiasm which broke out at the epoch of the American war, made but little impression on M. de Talleyrand. He was evidently prepared, and at once declared his opinion, not by pamphlets or inflammatory speeches, but by an argument far more forcible than either. Conjointly with his friend, the Count Choiseul Gouffier, he equipped a privateer, which he called the ‘Holy Cause,’ and which left the harbour of Brest in the month of May, 1779. The Duc de Castries, then minister of marine, furnished the guns. This single fact would almost serve to paint the time. A vessel of war armed and equipped by the *agent général du clergé de France*, aided by a *savant* of

the *haute noblesse*, and countenanced by one of the ministers, exhibits at once the utter confusion of ideas which must have existed just then.

“I have heard that the privateer, which, placed under command of a runaway scion of nobility, was to have carried death and destruction among the English merchant ships trading from the West Indies, never more made its appearance on the French coast. Be this as it may, I know that the prince does not like to talk of this little episode in his life, and the other day, when questioned rather closely upon the subject, he answered, ‘*Laissons cela, c’est un de mes péchés de jeunesse.*’

“One of the most curious documents in the world, and which I hope will be preserved in the prince’s memoirs, must be his answer to the letter of Pope Benedict XIV. His holiness had thought fit to pass censure upon the warlike demonstration of the Abbé de Perigord, and the Abbé de Perigord had excused himself in a reply so full of wit and eloquence, so full of instances taken from the history of every country, that the good-natured prelate fairly owned himself vanquished, and withdrew, with much grace and frankness, from the contest. This, I think, is the first action by which the Abbé de Perigord publicly displayed his adherence to the new principles, and separated himself in opinion from the *haute clergé* and the *haute noblesse*, who all, with scarcely an exception, were loud in their disapprobation of the unjust and unjustifiable interference of France in the quarrel between Great Britain and her rebellious colony. The step was considered in the light of a secession from the society of which he was a member, both by his lofty birth and holy profession; and many and many a prognostic was now beginning to be drawn of his future eminence or his approaching degradation, according to the mind which judged him.

“It was during the few years which elapsed between this period, and the events of 1789, that M. de Talleyrand first became acquainted with the Abbé Cerutti, the friend and colleague of Mirabeau, and that, together with them, he laid the foundation of the very first popu-

lar journal ever published in France. The design was spirited and bold; it was addressed to the inhabitants of the distant provinces of the kingdom; and, immediately on its appearance, obtained a success hitherto unrivalled in this species of literature.

“It has been falsely accused of having excited many of the atrocities of the revolution. It did not appear until the flames had spread, and could no longer be repressed, and he who now turns to the *Feuille Villageoise*, will recognise at once, amid the burning columns from the pen of Mirabeau, and the cold, bitter irony of Cerutti, the calm, reflective genius of Talleyrand, in those articles on the Division of Church Property—on the Improvements in National Education—on the Abuse of Power—on the Unity of Weights and Measures—which served to act as soothing balsam to the irritation produced by the fiery appeals of his more impassioned colleagues.

“He puts forth, in these addresses to the people, the promulgation of which has been deemed so criminal, nothing which he had not said before—not a single word of which he does not retain the most powerful conviction, ay, even to this very hour. Some of them might be quoted as models of reasoning and eloquence, although failing in the refinement of style and diction, which can only be acquired by that early familiarity with the classics, the want of which he has lamented all his life.

“Cerutti was a man gifted with the most splendid talents. His peculiar position claimed, perhaps, undue attention, from the very moment when he first appeared upon the revolutionary horizon. The reception of this champion of the people was most enthusiastic. Wherever he went, he was followed by an admiring crowd—every public meeting resounded with his praise—streets were called after his name; in short, he tasted every gratification of *amour propre* arising from popularity. But Cerutti was a misanthrope, and, far from seeking distinction, he shrank with disgust from publicity. The canker-worm was at his heart, and I have heard M. de Talleyrand declare that, during the whole time their intimacy lasted, he never once beheld him smile. His was

another of those anomalous existences created by the revolution. A gentleman, bred in indolence, yet adopting the obligations and active vigilance of a Jesuit; then becoming even a priest, the better to defend the cause of his beloved order; chosen as the private counsellor and friend of the dauphin (father of Louis Seize), and then suddenly—without pause, without gradation—plunging headlong into the delirium of democracy.

“It is singular that the cause of this unnatural course of events should never have been thoroughly investigated by any of the historians of the time, who all seem to agree in passing over without comment the motives which actuated Cerutti, or else in declaring them either altogether inscrutable, or the instigations of insanity. The close observer of the human heart can, however, at once discern the existence of some secret spring of action, some powerful incentive to this inconsistency, and will not remain satisfied with the abuse heaped upon poor Cerutti by the Abbé Georgel, the wordy historian of the diamond necklace, defender, *coûte que coûte*, of Louis de Rohan; nor yet with the light indifference with which he is mentioned by another author, who describes him in these words—‘A man of some capacity both as an orator and writer, but whose career was too short to allow him to display that ability in government which he seemed confident of possessing. He was of a sombre and taciturn character, which, combined with his almost total deafness, rendered him of difficult access. ’Tis said that the hopeless passion he had conceived for one of the ladies of the court brought on paralysis, which occasioned his infirmity, and ultimately ended in his death.’

“I have heard the history of Cerutti from M. de Talleyrand himself, and it forms one of the most extraordinary episodes of this extraordinary time. The prince related to me that, one evening after their work was over, the three *collaborateurs* of the *Feuille Villageoise*, led on by the very nature of the composition upon which they had been engaged, began to talk of the events of their past lives, and of the various causes

which had led to the desertion of caste, of which all three had been guilty. What a glorious study would it have been for the moralist, to have listened to those dark histories, as told by those three fiery spirits, each the hero of his own bitter tale. One can imagine all the hatred and the scorn of Mirabeau, as he related the circumstances of his youth of strife and misery; of his manhood, crushed and blighted by his father's unjust tyranny; his burning satire and his bitter scoffing must have been terrific. Then came the calm, deep mockery of Talleyrand; his history of neglect and injustice must have been more frightful still. Three mighty souls were they, rising in condemnation of the country and the times in which they had thus been spurned and persecuted.

"Every one knows the history of Mirabeau's long imprisonment and harsh treatment, and I have already told you the events which marked the youth of Talleyrand; but the story of Cerutti is known only to the few with whom he was most intimate, and is, perhaps, more illustrative of the spirit of the times than that of either of his friends. The man's career was short, and very like the flash which precedes the tempest—everything, while he was on the stage moving before the public eye—nothing, so soon as his part was over and the curtain dropped. He died and left nought behind to save him from oblivion—not even the memory of the manner in which he had performed his character, and in which he had been so much applauded.

"His father was a wealthy silk-grower in the environs of Turin, and his childhood was passed amid the shady groves, which stretched for miles around the château where his family resided. His younger brother had taken to books and learning, and had been appointed to accompany the young Count Hercules V—— on his travels; while Joseph Cerutti, the eldest of the family, remained at home to assist his father in the direction of his fortune and the improvement of the estate. His life was that of an Italian gentleman of the middle class at the time—that is, to say, his studies were neither very

deep nor his occupations very grave, and his days passed pleasantly enough in the exercise of small practices of piety, the cultivation of small adventures of gallantry, very little reading, and great indulgence in the *dolce farniente*; added to which, he was compelled to superintend the progress of the silkworms, which formed the whole wealth of the father and the patrimony of his sons. But this occupation was far from being sufficiently interesting to rouse him from the dream in which he lived, and in which his days might all have passed, had it not been for the one event which, sooner or later, will turn the tide of all men's lives, making the hitherto troubled sea of existence at once calm and placid, or changing its smooth surface into a raging hell.

Count Hercules V—— returned from Rome, whither he had been journeying with young Cesario Cerutti, the brother of our hero. The estate of the noble family of V—— joined that of the Cerutti, and from the friendship which existed between the young nobleman and the companion of his studies, sprung an intimacy between the two families, which was at variance with the Italian habits of the period, wherein distinctions and caste were more respected than in any other country in Europe.

‘was struck,’ said the Abbé Cerutti, as he told the story to his fellow-labourers, ‘with the change which a few months had made in the habits and temper of my brother Cesario. He had left us full of the enthusiasm and spirit natural to his age: he had returned taciturn and reserved in speech, gloomy, and abstracted in manner. He seemed to have a weight of care and misery upon his mind, which neither the affectionate attentions of his family nor the fondness of his mother, to whom he was devotedly attached, could succeed in shaking off. I observed that he was for ever seeking me, and requesting me to converse in private with him, as though he had something of moment to communicate; and then he would suddenly check himself, and talk of light matters, so much in contrast with the mournful tone of his voice and the gloom upon his brow,

that the contemplation was most painful. But I dared not question him concerning the cause of this change in his disposition, fearing to exasperate him, in the irritable mood in which he was. One day, when he seemed more communicative than usual, I sought to enliven our conversation by endeavouring to extort from him some little narrative of his journey to Rome, concerning which he had hitherto observed an unnatural silence.

“ ‘He said he had been happy, very happy with Count Hercules, (and yet he shuddered as he spoke the words,) and the kindness of the good Abbé Giordoni, the young Count’s preceptor, had so mingled pleasure with study, that the time had passed away swiftly and pleasantly as in a charmed dream. Why then did he gaze upon me with that strange expression in his eye? I could not resist the impulse which prompted me to seize the opportunity of seeking to discover the cause of his melancholy, and said, as I pressed his hand with affection, ‘Dearest Cesario, do not suffer the secret which hangs so heavy on your soul to crush you thus beneath its ponderous weight. Confide in me, my brother. What is it has disturbed your happiness, and thus changed your very nature?’

“ ‘You are deceived,’ replied Cesario, hastily, and with a kind of convulsive laugh; ‘I never was more happy or in better spirits than at this moment. Come with me this evening to the Villa V——, and see if it be not as I tell you. By-the-bye, I had forgotten to mention, that the whole family at the villa are anxious to welcome you, the old count and his son, and the abbé, and—and— (he hesitated)— in short, the whole of them will be glad to see you. So come to-night—yes, to-night—’tis time!’

“ ‘His head sank upon his bosom as he concluded, and he once more relapsed into his abstracted musing. I made no observation regarding the singular forgetfulness of which he had been guilty, nor of the want of attention on the part of the V—— family, in not inviting me themselves to the villa, but seized with avidity upon the opportunity thus afforded of penetrating the

secret of my brother's altered demeanour. I already knew Count Hercules, a studious and pious youth, who was considered a pattern for the whole country. I had also frequently seen the Abbé Giordoni, the preceptor, towards whom I felt an instinctive aversion, although railed at by my friends for my too great facility, in "taking dislikes;" but there yet remained one member of the V—— family whom I had not yet beheld, and a sudden conviction seized my mind, that she was the cause of my brother's misery, and that it was her name at which he had hesitated in his speech to me. I was therefore determined to watch every look, to listen to every word, which should pass between the pair, and to base my counsels to my brother upon what I should observe.

"At the hour appointed, we set forth to pay our evening visit at the villa. The gloom and pre-occupation of my brother increased as we drew near to our destination, and I began to doubt if such would have been the bearing of an impassioned expectant lover.

"We entered the great saloon unannounced. Cessario was free and intimate as a *fils de la maison*. The room was large, and dimly lighted by the shaded lamp upon the mantelpiece. The old count was buried in a slumber in his large arm-chair, and his grey head stood out from the fauteuil, calm and peaceful, the very emblem of contented and respectable old age. Not so was the expression of the individual who was seated near, and upon whom the light of the lamp fell, as if on purpose to light up the shadow which was passing at the very moment over his countenance—a very gleam of hell! It was the Abbé Giordoni, who was seated at the small table, ostensibly playing chess with the young Count Hercules—that is to say, the chess-board was placed between them, and the chess-men stood upright upon the board; but I instantly perceived that not one single piece had been disturbed from its primitive position, and it was evident that their occupation was of far more import, for the young man sat pale and trembling before the abbé, whose infuriated countenance and ve-

hement gesture plainly bespoke the violence of the discussion in which he had been engaged, although I could not judge of its nature, from the low tone in which it had been carried on, doubtless through fear of disturbing the poor old count, who slumbered on, little dreaming of the storm of hate and passion which had been conjured up close at his very ear.

“Our entrance disturbed the conversation, and I was painfully struck with the eagerness of welcome with which Count Hercules rushed forward to greet my brother; and which, considering that he had already seen him in the morning, and that almost every day since his return had been spent in his company, seemed forced and unnatural. He started from his chair, upsetting the table and the chess-board in his haste, and throwing his arms around my brother’s neck, he exclaimed, faintly, “God be praised, you are come at last. Cesario!”

“The abbé, meanwhile, advanced towards me with ecclesiastical grace and dignity. I ought at once to have suspected the man who could so easily replace the expression of rage which his features wore when I entered, by the smile of intense delight with which he held forth his hand to me, uttering, by a singular coincidence, almost the very words which Count Hercules had whispered to my brother, “*Eccolo alfin—questo caro amico.*”

“I ought to have suspected such heartiness of welcome from one who had displayed hitherto no stronger feeling towards me than that of common courtesy, whenever by chance we had met, which was but seldom, in our walks and drives around the neighbourhood. I could understand such warmth of greeting between the two young friends, but was sorely puzzled to discover by what right and title I was admitted to share in such strong demonstrations of friendship. However, any feeling of astonishment which I might have experienced was soon forgotten in the courteous reception which I met with from the old count, who, thus rudely roused from slumber, by the falling of the table and the u-

setting of the chess-men, rose to meet us with all the frank politeness which has ever distinguished the Piedmontese gentlemen of the old school, and completely put me at my ease, by immediately entering upon the subject which he knew would be most interesting to me, the improvement of my father's land, and the culture of our mulberry-grounds. The two young men were soon engaged in deep and earnest conversation together, and the Abbé Giordoni shaded his eyes with his hand, and attentively watched them both.

“The evening passed pleasantly enough, but I thought of little beside the young countess, whom I had not yet seen, and, when the door opened slowly and she was announced, my heart beat so violently, for my brother's sake, that any one who had witnessed my emotion would have imagined that I was already deeply in love with her myself. She entered without embarrassment, notwithstanding the presence of the strangers whom she found assembled in the saloon, and whom she had not expected to meet there, went up to her father, and kissed him on the forehead, and then turning to us, saluted us gracefully. I was struck with her extreme beauty, and at the first glance felt sure that my suspicions were right, and that Cesario was enslaved; but presently all my suspicions fell to the ground; for, as soon as she caught his eye, she stepped lightly across the floor, and accosted him easily and with grace, but with the happy calm of perfect indifference; while he, although roused for an instant by the duties of courtesy, having bowed politely, sank backward in the fauteuil from which he had risen on her entrance, without a word—without a glance, for I watched him narrowly—and resumed the conversation with Count Hercules, which had been interrupted on her entrance.

“I was fairly puzzled by this unexpected *dénouement* to the intrigue I had been at so much pains to invent. It was in vain that I sought to detect the slightest intelligence between them—there was none. The young girl seemed engrossed during supper by her attentions to her father, and scarcely raised her eyes towards any

of us, save in the courtesy which she might consider to be due from the hostess to her guests ; whilst my brother, whose seat at table was immediately opposite to hers, never once even glanced towards her. I left the villa that night full of strange feelings, and from that hour my existence was changed.

“How *can* I tell you, my friends, how it became so ? I know not myself, save that a web was spun around me from which I am not free at this very hour ! There seemed, from the very first, an overstrained demonstration of attachment towards me, and absolute *appropriation* of my time and of my actions, nay, my very thoughts were no more my own. The Abbé Giordoni was never absent from my side, and, what seemed stranger still, he was acquainted with the most minute secrets of our existence—the value of our land—the produce of our plantations—the revenue which we drew from the silkworms ; he even knew of the circumstances of the loan which we had been compelled to raise a few years before, and which, as we thought, had been kept a profound mystery between ourselves and the party of whom the money had been borrowed. I have lain awake whole nights to discover how this could be, and yet could not compass the mystery. I cannot tell you how much this circumstance preyed upon my spirit, for Heaven had gifted me with an independent soul, and an utter abhorrence of control, and the invisible fetters with which I felt myself manacled became more and more galling as I grew more determined to be free.

“It was on the occasion of my father's death that I felt this most of all. The abbé took upon himself, unsolicited and unapproved, the whole management of our affairs. He it was who arranged the retirement of our mother to the neighbouring convent of the Annunciata, to which I most decidedly objected ; but my opinion in this, as well as in everything else, was entirely overruled by that of the abbé. The next occurrence in the family, which gave me the strangest trouble and perplexity, was the determination of Cesario to sell the portion of the estate which had become his by my

father's will; and my amazement was increased tenfold upon learning who was the purchaser—it was the Abbé Giordoni. I was angry with my brother, and reproached him bitterly, but he replied, in a despairing voice, and with the tears flowing from his eyes, “What could I do? The land was needed by the good abbé!”

“My God, what could be the meaning of all this? How came it that this man had thus obtained such influence? Day by day did it increase and grow more irksome, still drawing, as it were, a charmed circle round my very existence, diminishing in circumference until it had grown so small that I could not even turn without feeling wounded by its pressure; every day and every hour drew the coils yet closer. It was then that I ended where I ought to have begun, and set myself earnestly to work to examine the character of the man, who had, in spite of me, gained such ascendancy over my family. To my great astonishment, I found him a man of the keenest wit and most consummate knowledge of the world, whose practical learning and experience were universal, whose energy and perseverance were dauntless. I soon discovered, with a feeling of terror which I cannot describe, that he had fathomed my character with as much accuracy as though I had lived with him from my youth upwards. He *knew* of my scorn and hatred of restraint, and therefore had used none. He *knew* that I was of a proud and melancholy temperament, and therefore had never roused my ire by opposition. I felt a bitter contempt for myself, when I found that in all things it was his system to *humour* me. The hour came at last, however, for the unravelling of all the mystery.

“One day, Giordoni came to me with busy and important looks, and with a hurried air, to consult me upon the plan of a building he was about to erect upon the ground which he had bought of Cesario. It was within view of the windows of my own château, and therefore it was the act of a friend to consult me upon the form and fashion of its structure, and, as in duty bound, I thanked him heartily for the kind attention.

“It was a chapel to Saint Ignatius which he was about to erect, “*en attendant* the convent,” he added, with a smile bland and affable, “which it was his intention to found when he should grow richer.” The dedication startled me.

“Not a convent of Jesuits?” said I, faintly, for I had imbibed a share of the popular hatred, which, just at that time, the Order had inspired throughout the whole of Europe.

“The abbé smiled again, yet more peaceably than before. “Pardon me,” replied he, in a gentle tone, “our Order has need of a station in this part of the country. We are poorly represented, my friend; observe—” and he drew forth his memorandum-book, “from Saint Tomaso to Mabli, eight leagues, from Mabli to this place, seventeen; it is too far.”

“The secret then was out; the whole mystery of the man, his perseverance and his patience, his confidence in himself, his utter contempt of me. He was a Jesuit—an active, busy, meddling Jesuit—one who held a degree in the Order—one who had command and authority, and could bid any of his underlings, slaves to his will, who was himself a slave, do his pleasure at the moment and without a murmur, even though the order should have been to murder his best friend, or betray to death his own mother; who himself durst not hesitate in the commission of any crime, provided it were done for the honour and advancement of the “Blessed Order of Jesus!”

“I am now convinced that, natural and simple as this avowal then appeared, it had been prepared *de longue main*, and that much was at that very moment depending upon the manner in which it would be received by me. He managed well, however, in hiding the emotion which my startled manner, and my exclamations of surprise and displeasure must have occasioned him, and launched forth at once, with graceful eloquence, upon the advantages of the Order of Jesus over all others—the power, the influence, which the meanest member of the “Society” possessed over every individual within his sphere.

He said that the confidence and strength of the association were so great, that nought could resist its influence. He showed me on the map how its ramifications had spread throughout Europe, until they had enveloped every civilized country as in a web, from which it was impossible to get free, and, when he had concluded, he took me out to inspect the workmen at the chapel, and to view the new plantation which he had commenced. I beheld it, indeed, and with a sad presentiment remarked that the avenues of lime-trees, which were already laid down, were all turned in the direction of my own château. I scarcely knew what it was that I dreaded, and yet felt a certainty of coming evil which completely overpowered every faculty.

“‘ You will smile at the determination which I took that very night—you will say that it was that of a school-boy—a coward—but you cannot know the terror which pervaded the population of our country at that very period, on account of the subtlety of the Jesuits. It had become the bugbear of society. The feeling had been nursed by the secret enemies of the Order, sent from France, where its dissolution had already been decreed in the boudoirs of Trianon, by the vindictive hatred of Madame de Pompadour. I determined, then, to flee—to leave my property in the hands of the agent, and to travel for a while, until the power of the serpent which was thus gaining ground upon me was weakened, or that I felt myself strong enough to encounter its cold and slimy coils without fear. I passed several days in making my preparations for the journey I meant to take, and confided my intentions to no one on earth save the overseer of the estate in whose hands I was about to place my interests. Cesario was absent. I would not even venture to write to him until I had set forth, for my terror of betrayal had grown so puerile, that I even feared the letter might be opened !

“‘ Everything was ready for my departure. The agent, a plain, honest man, had sworn to be as secret as the grave, and when, one evening, I took my leave of the eternal Giordoni, who now passed not a single day

without paying me his lengthened visit, I laughed at his form of farewell. "*A demain, à demain!*" called he from the gate; "to-morrow we will talk about the road from your grounds to my chapel—there *must* be a road, Cerutti—the high wall must come down. What need of walls between such friends as we?"

"I laughed as I pressed his hand in feigned warmth, echoing his portentous words of adieu. I knew that on the morrow I should be far enough away. He smiled likewise as he exclaimed, once more looking me earnestly in the face. "Farewell, my friend, my dearest friend, *à demain donc, à demain!*"

"He turned, and I watched his retreating form gradually fade in the moonlight, with a heart bounding with gratitude and joy at the prospect of my approaching deliverance. The horses were waiting on the by-road by the side of the château, and I could hear their joyous neigh from the gate where I was leaning to gaze after Giordoni. Everything seemed to breathe of peace and happiness. There was a nightingale perched among the branches of the mulberry-tree beneath which I stood, and her joyous melody gushed forth unsubdued, more free and unconstrained methought when the shadow of Giordoni no longer darkened the pathway; multitudes of the bright green glow-worms, peculiar to the summer nights of our country, were chasing each other over the smooth turf. I thought I had never beheld a night of such calm, such placid beauty.

"I was like the schoolboy about to escape the dominion of his pedagogue: eager to be free, yet scarcely as yet decided on the use that he would make of his long-coveted liberty. I had many plans in view, but none as yet decided.

"I will go from hence to Lyons," said I to myself, as I returned with light step towards the house; "there will I remain for a while, to study the manners of the people of whom I have heard so much; then on—on to Paris; 'tis there and there alone "*qu'on trouve le génie si on n'en a pas.*" I could scarcely contain my feelings at the thought of the change which by my own address

and discretion I was about to work in my destiny, and I whistled and sang aloud in glee at the bare thought of so much happiness.

“ ‘No more slavery, no more espionnage, and—shall I own it, my friends?—no more fear of a cold and disdainful love! Yes, *there* was the secret of the discontented misery of the last few months of my existence. From the evening of my first visit at the villa of Count V—, I had become the slave of the fair Signora Isabella. Her disdain of my advances, her coldness, had served to increase my passion, but had changed its character. Hope had given way to defiance, defiance to despair, yet still I loved, *and this was the reason why I wished to flee in secret* from the home where I was born, like a thief or an usurper—this it was that drove me forth to seek elsewhere the liberty I felt that I had lost—the repose which I so greatly needed. All these subjects for the future passed rapidly through my mind as I returned up the avenue. I had just gained the hall, I was ascending the steps which led to my apartment, when I was startled by the sound of footsteps close behind me. I was alarmed: I knew that the domestics had been all dismissed, and had long before retired from that part of the building, while the agent had my orders to await me with the horses. I turned in trepidation, my heart fluttered in my bosom, and my cheek grew pale as marble—it was *Giordani who followed me!*’

“ ‘Such was the state of abject fear in which I lived that, in the nervous agitation of the moment, I was about to confess my guilty design, and to sue for pardon; but there was neither anger nor suspicion upon the brow of the Jesuit, and it was with a calm and gracious smile that he spoke, as he held up before me a little billet which scented the air with the sweetest perfume.

“ ‘See what a faithless messenger am I,’ said he, shaking his head with a *bonhomie* quite paternal; ‘I was commissioned to deliver this letter with great despatch, and had well-nigh forgotten it altogether!’ ‘Twas well I thought of it before I got home, for I know not how I

might have been received had I returned without the answer.'

" 'I was seized with sudden faintness as I mechanically unsealed the billet and gazed at the signature. It was from the Demoiselle Isabella de V——, and, as I read the contents, my very soul gave way beneath the influence of the kindness and the *tender* tone it breathed.

" 'Need I say that I departed not that night—that I even retired to rest *rejoicing* that I had been prevented from listening to the rash suggestions of my evil genius, for such I was soon taught to believe the secret warnings of my better reason, to which had I but hearkened then, I should have been saved a whole life of misery.

" 'To you, who are both men of the world, there is no need to describe the sequel. Before three months had elapsed, I had become as fervent a proselyte to the principles which governed the "blessed Order" as Giordoni himself!—In three months more, the land which my father had saved with so much care and pains, and which I myself had toiled so assiduously to improve, deeming it a heritage to descend to my children's children, was no longer my own; it belonged by promise to the holy society of Jesus, of whom I now was proud to sign myself a weak, unworthy member. During all this time I had lived in a dream—a delusion the more wild and stirring, inasmuch as I am of a cold and torpid character, requiring the most powerful emotions to rouse me from my apathy. I do not think that I ever reflected on the future. It was enough that the Contessa Isabella loved me. She told me so again and again, and each time that she had spoken the words, I had granted some concession of which I repented not, deeming no sacrifice too great to win that single smile which I had by this time learned to prize more highly than my fortune—than my very life—to deem more precious than my father's memory or my mother's love! I was roused from the trance into which I had fallen by a letter from my brother Cesario, which was put into

my hand on my return home late one evening from the villa V——. It contained but few words, full of darkness and mystery—the restraint of one labouring under the terror of discovery.

“ ‘I have much to tell you,’ wrote he; ‘beware! you are deceived. I shall be with you to-night, but let it not be known. I wish to say but one word to you, and must depart again before dawn, without leaving the slightest trace of my visit. Let the gate at the bottom of the garden be left unlocked to-night, and, when all in the château have retired to rest, meet me by the tank close to the entrance. Hesitate not—I shall wait there till you come. You will find upon the first step of the reservoir a branch of the alder which grows there, which I will cut the moment I arrive, as a signal that I am waiting for you.’

“ ‘I cannot describe to you the perplexity into which I was thrown by the contents of this letter—nor the anxiety with which I awaited the opportunity of complying with the request contained in it. It seemed as if that moment was destined never to arrive, so tediously did the evening pass—so slow did the domestics seem in their preparations for retiring to rest.

“ ‘At length all was quiet in the château, and, with thanks to Heaven that it should at last be so, I muffled myself in my cloak, and ventured forth. The night was dark; there were neither moon nor stars; but so impressed was I by the tone of mystery in which my brother wrote, that I did not even carry with me the lantern with which I had returned from the villa, and drove back with blows my faithful dog, who had attempted to follow me as usual, lest his bark might alarm the servants. It was a calm, still night—not a whisper was heard among the trees, nor the movement of any living thing among the bushes which skirted the garden-path down which I passed, with beating heart, towards the tank. It was situated in a hollow at the bottom of the garden, and in a place well fitted for concealment, being embosomed in trees, and surrounded by a thick hedge, in order to shade the water from the

sun, so that, even in the heat of summer, the air always struck damp and chill to any one coming to it from the broad sunlit alleys of the garden.

“ ‘At the end of the narrow path, so narrow that even two persons could not walk in it abreast, a flight of stone steps, always wet and slippery, reached to the edge of the reservoir, which, at certain seasons of the year, was extremely deep and dangerous. I stood upon the steps, and endeavoured to penetrate the darkness; but I could discern nothing, save here and there the reflection in the water of some faint vapoury star, struggling to disperse the cloud which hung before it. I stooped and ran my hand along the stone. Cesario was already there—the branch of alder was laid where he had mentioned in his letter. I called, in low whispers, ‘Are you here, Cesario?’ There was no answer—not a sound, save, just at the very moment, and almost as if in reply, the low, melancholy howling of the dog whom I had repulsed on leaving the château, and who had remained watching at the door! I walked round stealthily to the gate by which my brother must have entered—perhaps I should find him awaiting me there. But no, the gate was open—he *must* be in the garden. Again did I call, and again, and still the same silence: and so I fancied that he must have arrived early, and, tired of tarrying in the same spot, was wandering through the grounds, but would most assuredly return to the place where he had appointed me to meet him. I sat down on the steps of the reservoir, consoled with this reflection, and waited on.

“ ‘Once or twice I fancied I heard footsteps approaching, and then I rose and paced in the direction whence I fancied the sound came. Then would I again call upon Cesario—again to meet with disappointment, and to sink once more upon the cold stone, in a paroxysm of anguish and impatience. By degrees, however, my ear became accustomed to the silence, and my eye to the utter darkness; and it happened with me then, as it has often done with others—my faculties became fatigued with watching and with listening, and I bent my head

upon my knees, and fell into an unquiet slumber. I know not how long I remained thus, but when I awoke it was already dawn—the cold grey early dawn which precedes the rising of the sun. The birds were already twittering and chattering in the branches above my head, and old Volpe, the hound, whom I had beaten back on the night preceding, apparently set free by the opening of the door, was thrusting his cold nose into my hand, to attract my attention. I patted him kindly—he looked up into my face with an expression I shall never forget, and howled so very piteously, that the sound thrilled to my very soul.

“ ‘I rose from my seat—every limb was paralyzed with cold—every joint stiffened by the uneasy posture which I had maintained so long. I walked to and fro for an instant, in order to dissipate the sensation of misery which I experienced, and reflected with vexation on the situation in which I had been compelled to pass the night. I could not help accusing Cesario of negligence and want of feeling, in thus leaving me to watch and wait in uncertainty for so many hours. I was about to move from the spot, when I know not what instinct prompted me to gaze around the place once more. I even looked over the hedge into the tank, and the dog ran hurriedly down the steps and stood at the bottom, whining in that sorrowful, uneasy tone, which expresses a sense of misery and danger with more power than any human language. I was attracted by the peculiar steadiness with which the animal stood looking towards the opposite side of the tank, and mechanically I suffered my gaze to wander in the same direction.

“ ‘Suddenly the beating of my heart was stilled, my very respiration checked, and the cold perspiration oozed in large drops from my forehead, as though I had been standing beneath the heat of a burning sun! There, beneath the leaden light of the misty dawn, I could distinctly see a human form lying at the water’s-edge, still and motionless; the face was concealed, turned downwards from the light; but I *knew* that it was my brother, and with a shriek of agony I sprang forward to the spot,

with frantic excitement tearing through the bushes which impeded my path. Before I had touched the body, I knew that life must be extinct. Not for a single moment did I labour under the puerile delusion so common to people in the like situation, but at once felt the certitude that my brother lay dead before me!

“ ‘ Death is at all times a ghastly spectacle, but there are hours and seasons wherein its presence inspires far less horror than at others; the bed of sickness—the darkened room—the lighted tapers—the priest murmuring consolation to the lingering soul—these are the natural attendants on death, and soften the disgust and dread that we feel at its approach. But here, in the full light of the rising dawn, the birds carolling amid the branches—the distant song of the merry vintagers who were already busy at their labours on the opposite hill—all seemed to jar upon the feelings, and to inspire a supernatural horror, from which I am not free even now when thinking of that hour. I raised my brother in my arms. He had fallen forward from the bank, for his head was in the water, which circumstance I thought at first might have caused suffocation. The bank was steep and slippery, likely to have given way beneath his feet, and he must have been thus precipitated into the water, whence he could not extricate himself without help. This was my first impression; but, as I raised that lifeless form to the light, I perceived a deep and ghastly wound in his side, from which the blood had flowed, not freely, but in a thick, turbid pool, and, as it were, drop by drop! The knife with which the deed was done lay by his side upon the grass. I recognised it as his own—my father’s gift to him when a boy—the very knife he must have used to cut the branch from the alder, as the signal of his arrival in the garden. Cesario had died thus, this miserable death, while I had been the whole night within sight of his dying struggles—within hearing of his dying groan, and yet had seen, had heard nothing—and when tired of cursing his tardiness, had set me down and *slept* almost within arm’s length of his bleeding corpse!

“ ‘ The event caused the greatest consternation throughout the whole country. We were much beloved, for my father’s sake ; and every inquiry was set on foot which could lead to a discovery of the means by which Cesario had met his death. But every measure proved fruitless, and I was forced to console myself with the opinion of Giordoni, who expressed a conviction that my brother, giving way to the melancholy which so long had preyed upon his mind, had committed suicide. The letter I had received seemed to many, by its tone of mystery, to betray symptoms of the excitement which usually precedes the execution of such a deed. Cesario was the first person buried in the new chapel of Saint Ignatius, Giordoni generously consenting to give absolution for his crime, and to attribute its commission to insanity.

“ ‘ As my destiny had begun, so did it proceed. The whole of my property was given up to the Order. I had been led on, step by step, by the hope of meeting with my reward—the hand of Isabella—she who had prevailed upon me to concede every point to Giordoni, by promises of eternal love. In the hopes she had held out, consisted now my only happiness, for I had no longer a future of my own. Of the flourishing fortune which my father left me, I was permitted to claim but the share which fell to me as one of the meanest members of the “ Society.”

“ ‘ Even then I did not despair—for how could I imagine that I was to be deceived? How can I tell you all that followed—how the illusions, one by one, dropped from my vision, and left me as I am—without faith, without belief either in God or man!

“ ‘ I had for some time observed a change in Isabella—an embarrassment for which she herself, when taxed with it by me, would account by attributing it to the perpetual disputes and *tracasseries* which she had to endure with her father, concerning her attachment to me. The old count had long since forbidden all intercourse between us, but we had kept up an active correspondence, and obtained frequent interviews to-

gether by means of the Abbé Giordoni, and I was therefore justified in believing in her truth. Judge, then, of my despair, when told that the contessa, weary of the struggle she had to endure in her own home on my account, had resolved to retire to a convent, with the determination never to see or correspond with me until her father should consent to our union! She well knew that this condition was equivalent to a total rupture. I had given up everything for her sake, and she now deserted me!

“ ‘ You, my friends, have both of you passed through the ordeal of passion, and can best judge of the storm of hate and rage which this conviction raised within my bosom—how in my bitterness I forswore her love, and cursed her very name! It was then that Giordoni came to my aid with his specious arguments and eloquent reasonings. He pointed out to me the utter nothingness of human love, and persuaded me to turn my energies into another channel, and, by taking priest’s orders, to seek forgetfulness of my wrongs in satisfied ambition.

“ ‘ I was now, as I have told you, without resource, a blighted and a disappointed man: his proposition suited well with the state of feeling which I experienced at the time, and I accepted it without hesitation. I was actuated, in taking this step, by a sentiment of revenge, and was glad to prove to the faithless Isabella that I relied no longer on her *promises*—that I reckoned no longer on her love. You know how well and how truly I fulfilled my office—how ardently I strove in the cause of the Jesuits—and how at Lyons I succeeded in my mission—and when the dauphin called me to be his counsellor and director, how indefatigably I strove to avert the evil day, which I felt was dawning for the “Society.”

“ ‘ I worked in earnest, and spared neither toil nor anxiety in the fulfilment of my task. I might have persisted to this day, had it not been for a circumstance which changed the whole end and aim of my existence. I had not been long an inmate of Saint Cloud, when I

received, from Turin, a packet from my agent, the man whom I had chosen to manage the estate when I was about to depart, to fly from the influence of Giordoni. He had written to me when at the point of death, and the torments of his conscience had instigated him to make a full confession of the deceptions of which I had been the victim, and in which he had been assisted by Giordoni. The Order of Jesus had long coveted the estate belonging to the Cerutti. The abbé had undertaken to acquire it. My unhappy brother, being of a religious turn, had fallen an easy victim.

“ ‘Once a member of the order, his task was to betray every word and action which passed in our family, to act as spy upon every proceeding in his father’s house. It was his remorse at the part he was compelled to play, which had caused the bitter melancholy that had so distressed me in former years. He had been commissioned to draw me to the villa V——. This he had resisted, well knowing to what end I was to be attracted thither. My own desire had, however, served his vow of blind obedience; but, as he had proved himself a weak servant, he was dismissed in disgrace, and despatched to another station. The agent was chosen in his stead, and well did he execute his foul task. Not a look, not a thought of ours, but what was written down and conveyed to Giordoni; not a letter but was opened, not a message but was reported. As you have seen, I fell an easy prey to the cunning of the Jesuit—the falsehood of the *Jesuitess*. The man, in his confession, went on to relate, with tears of repentance, he said, that he himself had stabbed Cesario, by “higher command.” He had read the letter before delivering it to me, and the person “in command” had feared that our meeting would have marred all.

“ ‘There was no further revelation; the name of the person “in command” was withheld, but hypocritical still, even at the dying hour, the fellow ended abruptly, by calling on me to offer up my prayers for the repose of his eternal soul. *My prayers!* he has my everlasting curses even in his grave.’

“ M. de Talleyrand told me that Cerutti had grown so excited while relating the latter portion of his history, that the two friends desired him to desist, and to leave the recital till another time. It appears that, even with this dread secret on his mind, further misery was yet in reserve for Cerutti.

“ The Order of Jesus was tottering to its basis. Agents of the Society filled every court in Europe, in spite of the contumely cast upon them, most especially in France : yet was it there that they were most active in their manœuvres. By a fatality, which, however, will not appear singular when we remember the talent which she had already displayed, and the high position she held in the Order—it was the Contessa Isabella de V——, now become Marquise de F——t, who was deputed to Saint Cloud, which had become the head quarters of Jesuitical intrigue. There was no witness to the first interview which took place between Cerutti and his faithless love : but they say that the scene must have been terrific, for he was carried from the apartment to his bed in a senseless state, and remained for months paralysed in every limb. He never recovered from the shock which this event had given to his constitution. Twenty years afterwards, when intimate with Mirabeau and Talleyrand, he could not mention the name of the Marquise de F——t without betraying every symptom of the most powerful emotion, and would confess that, even amid the excitement of the stirring events in which he had been called to take a part, her image was never absent from his mind.

“ There is little doubt that, had circumstances taken their natural course, she would have regained as great an influence as she had before possessed. It is certain that, during the proscription of the nobility, *her* safety alone caused anxiety to Cerutti, and even at his latest hour, her name was hovering on his lips. The death of Cerutti was severely felt by the republicans, who hesitated not to attribute to him a greater share of talent than even that possessed by Mirabeau ; and I have heard M. de Talleyrand frequently declare that the plan of every

speech pronounced by the latter was submitted to Cerutti before it was uttered in the assembly.

“The attachment of the two friends was ardent and sincere, proof against calumny, and firm in spite of jealous intrigue. Chosen to pronounce the funeral oration of Mirabeau, Cerutti burst into tears as he concluded, declaring that he should not long survive the loss he had sustained. His prediction was fulfilled. In less than a year from that very day, he himself descended to the tomb, and M. de Talleyrand alone remained of that all-powerful trio, whose efforts, combined, would have given another turn to the destinies of Europe.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE SALONS OF PARIS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.

“WITH Cerutti, Mirabeau, and the *Fenille Villageoise*, began for Talleyrand a new era, a fresh existence, outwardly, at least, for, after all, it was but the realization of the splendid dreams with which he had solaced his young ambition ever since that memorable day on which he had changed the dark blue broad-cloth and bright buttons of the *joyeux collegien* for the black serge soutane of the *séminariste*. I have often heard him declare, in his moments of *épanchement*, that during the years of hardship and trial which followed the first brief triumph of the new ideas, while toiling for existence in America, or struggling to keep up a precarious position in Hamburg, he never once looked back with regret upon the splendour of his life as Bishop of Autun, surrounded by luxury and grandeur; he never murmured at the loss of wealth, the change of station; but what he should lament

to the latest hour of existence, is the decay of that *society* in which he had been bred, which was lost in '89 never to return, and which he, perhaps, by his peculiar tone of mind, was fitted more than any other man to enjoy. The events of '89 divided his life into two epochs, so distinct, so far distant from each other, that it often seems to him, when looking back upon the past, that he has realized the old fable, and indeed lived and breathed during two separate periods, and enjoyed two lives, with all their individual hopes and fears, their several joys and sorrows, the triumphs and defeats peculiar to each.

"I have been much struck with some few observations of his upon the charm of the intellectual existence which he had enjoyed before the breaking up of the old system: he scarcely ever reverts to the Revolution without bestowing a regret upon the moral intercourse which it destroyed. He was even then sadly aware that the great changes he desired so much must of necessity bring others which he dreaded even more. Even then he was sometimes led to doubt whether the good which had been gained could ever compensate for that which had been forfeited. So impressed was he with this idea, that he was like the traveller, who, having arrived at the summit of the mountain, up whose flowery path he has been climbing so gaily, turns back to throw one wistful glance upon the country which he has left behind, with a sad presentiment that he shall not behold the like again. When he is in good humour at Valençay, he loves to linger in memory on that time, and I have known him remain whole days, and even weeks, absorbed in the past, disdaining the present, as unworthy of a good man's interest or a wise man's concern. It is then that his conversation is most interesting: and, after having spent a few hours in listening to those anecdotes which with him seem to *couler de source*, one might almost be led to fancy that one has been holding communion with the dead.

"I remember, on one occasion, to have felt a chill come over me upon hearing him begin an anecdote in

these words: 'I was one evening at Madame de Boissière's, when who should enter but Madame Geoffrin'—Why, the very name is sufficient to bring back the whole of the eighteenth century, with its strange mixture of elegant *badinage* and fierce philosophy, its motley crowd of rude encyclopedists and elegant *marquis à talons rouges*!

"Talleyrand had the good fortune to enter the world of fashion under the very best auspices. It was at the house of the Marquis de Brignolé, one Saturday evening in the year 1772, that he made his *début* on leaving the *séminaire*. It was a memorable event in his life, of quite as great importance as any of those which have succeeded it, and he felt far more emotion upon this occasion than he did when, some thirty years later, he stepped forward to receive the key of *grand chambellan*, or the *portefeuille* of the *affaires étrangères*. Can you not fancy him as he entered that old aristocratic saloon in his *petit collet*? (the coquettish distinction, now gone by, of the candidate for clerical honours.) He was a remarkably handsome youth, and his fresh complexion and long golden hair must have appeared to great advantage among the crowd of withered *savans* in powdered wigs, with which the *salon* was already filled. To hear him relate the adventures of this his first *soirée* is like reading a page torn from some old memoir, and can seldom fail to inspire a feeling of interest almost akin to awe in the mind of the listener. He tells a story, too, with peculiar gusto, and seems to grow young again in the memory of the circumstances which marked his first appearance in society.

"Madame de Brignolé was one of the most witty clever women at that time in Paris, and held a peculiar position in society, from having had the address to shake off the trammels of caste and clique, and to avow herself the admirer of all that was admirable, whether it proceeded from this set or from that, from the daring *philosophe* or shrinking *vrai-croyant*. She had thus succeeded in gathering together in harmony and good-will elements the most discordant in themselves, and which could be made to amalgamate nowhere save beneath her roof—

Madame du Deffand and Madame Geoffrin, Voltaire and Jean Jacques.

“All agreed to consider her *salon* as neutral ground, and to accept at her hands the flag of truce, which she held out to each with so much grace and affability. It happened that the reception wherein the young Abbé de Perigord made his first appearance was a particularly brilliant one, owing to the return of Baron Holbach, after a long absence from Paris. It was on this occasion that he made the acquaintance of the Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the leaders of fashion of the day, a specimen of the elegant *roué*, the *gredin de bonne compagnie*, who still maintained much of the power they had acquired. Their friendship commenced with a quarrel, and lasted through every change of circumstance until the death of Boufflers, which happened during the Restoration in 1815.

“It would delight you to hear the prince relate this story. He laughs even now at the boyish *espèglerie*, although expressing great contrition for the horrible pun which passion and circumstance wrung from him in the heat of the moment. It was his first, and he says it was his last also, although its great success might certainly have warranted many a repetition of the attempt. The young abbé had ensconced himself in a vacant seat, quite aloof from the rest of the company, being bent on observing all that passed, and caring not for a share in the conversation. He had not long been seated in this place when he was accosted by Philidor, the renowned chess-player, who, like himself, was a man of few words, and of most modest and retiring habits. He was an old *habitué* of the house, and therefore a valuable neighbour for our young novice, and they soon fell into close and friendly conversation. D'Alembert was there, and Diderot, and many other of the bright particular stars of the day, and Philidor, with good-natured attention, pointed them out to the abbé, much diverted with the great interest the latter seemed to take in each illustrious individual who swept past him on his way to lay his homage at the feet of the lady of the house. They

had been some time conversing thus, when their retirement was invaded by two young officers, the one an hussar, the other belonging to the regiment of Royal Cravatte, poor Marie Antoinette's favourite regiment, and the most insolent and saucy one in the whole service. They were evidently very deep in the enjoyment of some good story, for they were speaking low and laughing heartily.

"'Let us get a seat down yonder against the wall,' said the one to the other, 'and I will tell you the rest of the joke. I should not like it to be overheard.'

"'But I see no room,' replied his companion; 'there is Philidor down there talking to some unfledged black-bird from the *séminaire*.'

"'No matter, we must have the place. Philidor will soon yield, and the abbé cannot hold out against us.'

"They advanced straight to where Philidor and his companion were seated, and, with an insolence which can hardly be understood in our day, but which it appears was quite the mark of high birth and fashion at that time, began to annoy, by their loud talking and rude behaviour, the occupants of the two seats which they coveted. Poor Philidor, whose meekness and patience were proverbial, soon became alarmed, and sounded a retreat at once without parley. He rose, with a frightened look at the abbé, and, remarking that the room was so insupportably hot that he was stifled, walked away on tip-toe, not even daring to cast a glance behind. The Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the *garne-mens*, immediately seized the vacated chair, and sat upon it soldier-fashion, astride upon the seat with his chin resting on the back, staring with effrontery at the young abbé, who, nothing daunted, remained quietly in the same position that he had maintained during the whole evening. He had overheard every word of the conversation which had passed between the two friends as they approached, and was determined not to move an inch. The Royal Cravatte stood beside the hussar, and the abbé was thus completely hemmed in, save on the side next the door, through which it was the evident

intention of the two friends to make him soon vanish. Finding, however, their intention completely defeated by the cool manner with which it was received, the Royal Cravatte lost patience, and asked the abbé, with a sneer, if the heat of the place did not incommode him, at the same time advising him, with condescending kindness, to seek the refreshing coolness of the second *salon*, as his friend had already done at their approach. But the abbé answered with a bland politeness peculiar to his manner even then, thanking the officer for his attention, but assuring him that, being of a rather chilly nature, he preferred remaining in the warmer apartment. Royal Cravatte thereupon grew angry; he was a Cadet de Montigny, not long arrived from Normandy, and had not yet lost his miserable Norman drawl.

“*Dites donc, mon cher abbé,*” said he. “Perhaps, as you are just born, you may not yet have been to school; you have yet to learn many things, Monsieur l’Abbé, among which—” “Pardon me,” interrupted the abbé, starting up, with heightened colour and with flashing eye, and mimicking the lengthened nasal twang of the officer, “I *have* been to school, and have learnt my letters, and know that an *abbé* (A B) is not made to *céder* (C D), and ‘tis not your *épée* (E P) can make me *ôter* (O T).”

“The loud voice and insolent gesture of the officer had caused a little knot of the assembled guests to gather round, and this sally was received with roars of laughter. Boufflers, who never could resist pleasantry, seemed more diverted than any one present; and, while the discomfited Royal Cravatte slunk among the company, unable to bear the mockery which the witty retort of the abbé had brought upon him, Boufflers shook him heartily by the hand, and applauded the jest with right good will.”

“This is the very first *bon-mot* of the prince upon record, and although he expresses himself heartily ashamed of its perpetration, yet it was the means of establishing his reputation as a person not to be slighted,

one with whom it would be necessary to reckon before venturing on pleasantries. The story, of course, went round the *salon*, to the infinite delight of the *savans*, who were enchanted at witnessing the military insolence of the Royal Cravatte receive a check from a quarter whence it would have been so little expected. Rumour of the witticism soon reached the ears of Madame du Deffand, who instantly requested that the young abbé might be presented to her. It was the Chevalier de Boufflers himself who undertook the office, and, with a fluttering heart, young Talleyrand walked across the *salon*, and accosted the venerable lady, whose great fame for making reputations had reached even to the *séminaire* from which he had just escaped. It was an awful moment of his life, and he describes it as one of the greatest emotion he has ever experienced.

“Madame du Deffand was at that time the oracle of the witty circles of Paris; her verdict was sufficient at once to make or mar the reputation of a man of wit; and it cannot be wondered at, therefore, if our young *séminariste* approached with reverence the high fauteuil in which the lady sat, as it were enthroned, presiding over the assembly with undisputed sway, nor if the whole scene should have produced an impression upon his memory which time has not even yet been powerful enough to efface. Madame du Deffand was surrounded by a select circle of her chosen friends, the favourite few whom she honoured with especial notice; and in the midst there stood, beside her chair, a low stool, reserved for those with whom she wished to hold more private converse than could possibly be enjoyed with any member of the circle. It was to this seat that the Chevalier de Boufflers led the young Abbé de Perigord, who thus in a moment found himself the object of curiosity and criticism to the whole collection of *beaux-esprits*, who served as a kind of body-guard to their queen elect. The abbé was, however, at the moment, but little occupied with the effect which he might produce upon the company; his attention was entirely absorbed by Ma-

dame du Deffand herself; and if he *did* experience a slight nervous agitation as he took his seat beside her, it was in dread of her all-powerful verdict alone.

“It was almost impossible to imagine a countenance of greater benignity than that of Madame du Deffand; she was a complete specimen, both in person and costume, of venerable beauty; and as the abbé gazed upon her, he *felt* that there was no longer ridicule in the platonic love of Horace Walpole, or in the enthusiastic passion of her later admirers. She had been, as you are aware, totally blind for many years, and this infirmity, instead of being a disfigurement, as might be imagined, seemed to increase the mild placidity of her features almost to beatitude. At the moment of young Talleyrand’s approach, she was still under the influence of the delight which his boyish retort had inspired, and, as soon as he was seated, she bade him recount the story, which he was fain to do, and, aided by her encouragement and the applause of the circle, he told it with so much *verve* and good-humour, that his success was complete. He was welcomed among the *coterie* as a kindred spirit, and from that hour was considered an acquisition to that choice ‘circle.’ He was thus thrown at once into the midst of the society of *gens-de-lettres* of that epoch, the most brilliant ever registered in the annals of the world. The schoolboy pun of Talleyrand is forgotten now—lost amid the more sterling wit of the many *bon-mots* and trite aphorisms to which he has given utterance, and which have become popular in every country. Not so the *naïve* exclamation of Madame du Deffand upon the occasion, when she learned the fright and sudden retreat of Philidor. ‘That man was born a fool,’ said she; nothing but his *genius* saves him.’

“It is by the multiplicity of anecdotes of this nature that the prince has the power of conveying the listener, at a single bound, back to the eighteenth century. The absence of all passion, or, what is more probable, the great command he has acquired over it, gives a greater interest to his recitals than any I have ever experienced while reading the best written memoirs. I have heard

from another quarter of the judgment of the prince's character pronounced by the blind woman on that very same evening, and which, if true, ought to stamp her fame as a physiognomist beyond compare. After having passed her hand slowly over the features of the young abbé, as was her wont when any stranger was presented to her notice, she exclaimed, '*Allez, jeune homme. Nature has been lavish of her gifts, and your own foresight will render you independent of those of fortune.*'

"The immense variety of pictures like the foregoing, which the prince can command at will from the storehouse of his memory, is almost incredible. No one seems to have understood so well as himself that stupendous epoch, the latter half of the eighteenth century, that glorious reign of intellect and reason, when, for the first time in the history of society, genius and talent were admitted to greater consideration than high birth or riches; when every passion—the love of pleasure—the love of power—even the love of the marvellous—had given place to the love of *truth*—sometimes the greatest of all marvels: when the old aristocracy, tottering with decay, seemed to call in weak and puny accents upon its robust successor, the aristocracy of letters, for succour in its hour of need, 'Help us, or we perish!' and was answered sturdily, 'Be of us; or look to yourselves;' when the high-born and the long-descended sought no more to *honour* with patronage, but to *flatter* by imitation, those whom their ancestors would have deemed of scarcely more importance than their lacqueys; when, to be admitted to the circle of Madame Geoffrin, or the *déjeuners* of the Abbé Morellet, was a distinction more eagerly sought for than the admission into the royal circles had been during the preceding reign.

"This short pause before the revolution, which might be compared to the breathing time allowed to combatants, or rather to the cold shiver which precedes the raging fever, has been described by the prince as the most intoxicating period of his life. In this unprecedented mixture of society, he was viewed with favour

by each and all. Whether as the nobleman of aristocratic descent, or the man of wit and talent, he was admitted into every circle, and perhaps was thus singular in his perfect acquaintance with them all. He, who has so little enthusiasm in his character, will sometimes grow quite enthusiastic when speaking of that time; and I have heard him exclaim with melancholy pride, 'Could I, by forfeiting the memory of that brief space of light and glory, add thrice the number of years so spent to my existence *now*. I would not do it. I hold too dear even the privilege which I possess of exclaiming with Ovid, "*Vidi tantum*," and often mourn those days in the very words of old Brantôme: "Nothing is left of all that wit and gallantry, that vast expenditure (*folle dépense*) of bravery and chivalry. What good remains to *me* of all this pomp? None—*save that I have seen it!*"

"The greatest of all the regrets expressed by the prince is for the art of conversation, '*l'art de causer*,' which, he declares, never flourished in any country save France, and has been lost even there ever since the revolution. He himself is perhaps the only individual left to tell us in what that 'art' consisted. Like every gift of the Muses, it seemed to shun the circles of the great, and to flourish best where reigned equality. The *réunions* of Madame Necker in Paris, when her husband was minister, were always stiff and embarrassed; her charming *déjeuners* at St. Ouen, where all state and ceremony were laid aside, will be for ever celebrated in the annals of letters. The proper cultivation of the 'art of conversation' was dependent on the union of many circumstances, and success could not be relied on even by those who appeared in every way best qualified for the attempt. None could tell why it was that some succeeded thus while others failed—while the same wit which shone so brightly in one *salon* was dull and frigid in another. D'Alembert declared that *he* could find conversation but in one single *salon* in Paris, that of Madame Suard, the wife of the celebrated translator and commentator of Hume and Robertson, of whom

Boufflers said to M. de Talleyrand one day, ‘*She is the only pretty woman of my acquaintance with whom I have never been in love ; and yet she is the woman I love best on earth.*’ A more delicate compliment to virtue than this was, perhaps, never paid. Diderot was most animated in the house of Madame Helvetius, and nursed his powers for her reception-days.

“Madame Geoffrin herself presided over her own *salon* after the death of Fontenelle, who, for many years, deaf, purblind, and almost centenary, had thrown such lustre on her meetings, that foreigners of rank, and wealth, and talent, had crowded to Paris merely to be presented there : and such was the charm of the society into which they found themselves ushered, that many of them renounced their country to enjoy it without molestation. Buffon, who in ordinary intercourse was vulgar in the extreme (so at least says M. de Talleyrand, who knew him well), became sublime at Moulin-Joli, where Watelet the painter had the good luck to assemble all the wit and talent of the capital. Here it was that Buffon one day grew inspired, and recited whole chapters of his work without missing a single word, much to the astonishment of many of the strangers there, who thought that it was all improvisation. These intellectual *soirées* of the *roture* had succeeded in the guidance and government of ‘conversation’ to the *petits soupers* of the *ancien régime*, but differed from them, inasmuch as the intellect alone was fed. The principle of equality had gone so far, that it was agreed among the *littérati* to avoid the tables of the rich, lest he who gave a good dinner should feel a right to direct the conversation.

“At most of these literary meetings, therefore, no set repast was to be found; the refreshments provided were but scanty and of the simplest kind. One single cup of coffee for each guest at Madame Suard’s, one single glass of punch (sometimes prepared by Franklin, though) at Madame Helvetius’s, formed the whole of the *menu*. Sobriety was considered indispensable to the clearness and steadiness of debate, and the intellect remained unthickened by eating and drinking. The

Abbé Morellet alone had chosen to add music and feasting to the attraction of the conversation held at his house, and had done so with success. But the *déjeuners* were exquisite, although slight. ‘*Eat a little and of little*’ was the abbé’s recommendation to his guests, and the music, that of Glück, was presided over by himself, and executed by Mellico. The first representation of ‘*Orphée*’ took place at one of these *déjeuners*, the *romance* of which had such an effect on Rousseau, that he almost fainted on hearing it, declaring that ‘It was music never to be heard at all, or listened to for ever.’

“There was but little jealousy at these different ré-
unions; each came prepared to contribute to the general amusement, and to listen to the contributions of others. Every one was openly criticised and honestly applauded according to his merit. The barren fecundity of Parny could find admirers as well as the noble poetry of Delille. There was scarcely, indeed, a distinction of *coterie*, so nicely were the elements of this society blended. The only dissidence which existed was between Madame Geoffrin and the Abbé Morellet, in consequence of the preference of Jean Jacques Rousseau for the house of the latter. Madame Geoffrin had sought by every means in her power to conciliate the good-will and favour of Jean Jacques, but she was too fond of patronage. And to all her advances he had answered, in his surly language, ‘that he hated both benefits and benefactors.’

“The well-known *mot piquant* of Madame Geoffrin upon the abbé’s guests, which she declared were composed of ‘*trompeurs, trompés, trompettes*,’ amply revenged her disappointment, but widened the breach between the rival camps.

“‘The chief delight of the abbé’s réunions,’ says M. de Talleyrand, ‘was the perfect equality which reigned there. The terror of any encroachment or assumption of superiority was so great, that Madame Suard, on being accused of allowing d’Alembert to act as *président* of the society gathered at her house, by placing him on a higher *fauteuil* than those occupied by the other gues’s,

was obliged to *apologize* for so doing, and to plead the ill health and weakened digestion of the philosopher, which compelled him to remain continually in an almost upright position.'

" 'Good Heavens! what a quantity of pattens!' exclaimed, in a sneering tone, M. de Creutz, the Swedish ambassador, as he entered the ante-room at Madame du Deffand's, where Madame Necker had undertaken to present him.

" 'So much the better,' answered the lady, 'they give us promise of good company.'

" It was in the frank reception of talent, no matter whence it emanated, wherein lay the secret charm of these *conversaziones*. No individual was excluded as a matter of course, none admitted as a matter of right.

" I remember being once much delighted with an argument which took place upon this very subject between the prince and one of the best writers of our own day, who has since risen to greatness and power by the assistance of his pen alone. The latter maintained that a greater knowledge of mankind was to be obtained by the study of well-written books, than could be acquired even by personal experience. The prince, in reply, gave utterance to some of the most beautiful and original thoughts which I have ever heard him express.

" 'Tell me not of books,' said he, good-humouredly. 'they never can contain the *natural* impressions of the writer. They can express neither surprise nor fear—the very anger which they convey has been all premeditated. Tell me not of books—they are "composed" by men, and are even greater hypocrites than they. The history of every age would be found with far greater truth in the history of its conversations (*causeries*) than in the most brilliant of its literary productions. Few men write, all converse; authors have copied each other, both in style and sentiment, ever since the world began, but the *causeur* himself, and speaks as he feels and thinks. The old axiom, *verba volant*, is a great evil, but the addition to the proverb, *scripta manent*, is a greater still. You, who are preparing to write the his-

tory of one of the greatest struggles which ever took place in the annals of the universe, would do well to study the history of the conversations of the generations preceding; you will find there the preconception of many an event which falsely seems to have occurred spontaneously, and which overwhelms us with wonder at its apparent rashness. Even Louis Quatorze, whose Bastille yawned so greedily for those who dared to *write* a syllable against the justice of his measures, was known to wince beneath the lash of the witty *causeurs* of his day; he felt that he was powerless against their attacks, and was compelled to flatter and to pardon, as Richelieu, that greater tyrant still, had been forced to do before him. He was too clever to affect to despise their ridicule, and trembled, lest resenting it might expose him to further stings.'

" 'These wittlings are as troublesome as summer-flies,' said the magnificent monarch one day to Colbert, who had reported to him an epigram which he had heard in the *salon* of Madame Cornuel.

" 'Yes, sire, *and just as unconquerable*,' replied Colbert.

" 'To which remark the greatest sovereign of the world could only answer with a sigh of mortified conviction. Not a privilege was granted during the reign, not a decree was passed, which had not first been debated in the circles of fashion, with as much bitterness and energy as it afterwards created in the royal council chamber. The memoirs of the time, the letters of Madame de Sevigné, bear ample evidence of this. The regent who succeeded, was himself of a spirit too near akin to the intrepid *causeurs* of his reign to visit them with severity. He laughed with them and at them, while his harshness to those writers who displeased him was even greater than that of his predecessor. Louis Quinze encouraged not the persecution of authors, but loved to listen to the daily report of the "conversations" which took place, not only among the court circles, but even down to those of the lowest *bourgeois*. Madame de Pompadour complains bitterly, in one of

her letters, of this extraordinary apathy concerning the libels which were published both against herself and him. "He cares not for what is written, only for what is said," exclaimed she, "as if any consideration could restrain the tongues of ungrateful courtiers."

"The author of the gross epigram upon Marshal Saxe was suffered to go scot-free, while the poor parrot who recited it at Madame de la Vaillière's for the amusement of the company, was punished with the Bastille for life. Now compare all these *causeries* and their results to the *conversations* of the eighteenth century, and their gigantic issue—the great revolution. The displacing of a minister—the puerile questions of religious form—the end and aim of *Télémaque*—these were the kind of questions which had formed the subjects of debate during the reign of Louis Quatorze. The acrimony with which they were discussed, and the genius and passion which were displayed in the disputes to which they gave rise, sometimes went far enough to alarm the throne, without creating the slightest interest in the minds of the people.

"How different the consequences of that single remark, made in the midst of a gay and laughing *coterie*, soon after the accession of Louis Seize, when everything promised security and happiness, prosperity within and peace without, when not a single indication of the distant tempest had as yet appeared; and the old nobleman asked, in jeering pleasantry, of his son, who was speaking of the power of the law—"And pray, young man, will you tell me what *is* the law?" and was answered by the young man, with sudden inspiration, "The law is the expression of the general will!" The axiom has since been repeated to satiety, and has formed the text and basis of the grandest arguments of the revolutionary orators, but few know that it was first pronounced in the manner I have described. I found the whole account of this "conversation" in a letter among my uncle's papers, in which the writer, who was present when it occurred, gives also the description of the high disputes which the remark created, after the

first moment of silence with which it was received—the silence of conviction in the young, the silence of disapproval in the old—had passed away. This maxim, which, dropped thus at random, buried like the acorn, not forgotten, and which brought forth such goodly fruit in its due time and season, is another proof of the tremendous power of our *soi-disant* “gay and frivolous” CONVERSATION.’”

CHAPTER XII.

TALLEYRANDS BOUDOIR — PORTRAITS — MADAME DE BRIONNE — MADAME DE FLAHAUT — A GAMBLING SCENE—THE CHEVALIER DE FENELON — MADAME GRANDT — PRINCESS TALLEYRAND.

ON the morning after the conversation on the art of conversing, which I have just transcribed, I happened to find myself for some little time alone with C. in the prince's dressing-room. I had been summoned to the sanctum by M. de Talleyrand himself, who had received letters from England by that day's post, in answering which my English might, he thought, be turned to account. I had obeyed the message with the greatest pleasure, as C. had already informed me that admission to his boudoir at the hour of his toilet was an honour sought by many, and accorded but to few. In this exclusion he was most rigid, and he reserved the admission as a *distinction*, refusing to yield it as a right even to his most intimate friends. It was perhaps well that he did so, for, by a singular inconsistency, he who has been so often reproached with prudence and caution, was at this moment unguarded and unsuspecting as a child. As I had, according to the etiquette of the place,

forestalled by some little time the precise moment fixed by the prince for our rendezvous, I profited by the vacant time to examine attentively the furniture and ornaments of this favourite retreat of the diplomatist, wherein perhaps the peace or discord of European states had been at various times planned and promoted.

It was a light and cheerful apartment, looking out into the fosses surrounding the château, which, at that season of the year, were all gay with verdure and flowering shrubs; then far away the view extended over the park, at the end of which the dark forest encircles the landscape with a belt of sombre hue, and shuts out the distant horizon. The room contained but little furniture, and that all of the antique cast, in use at the time of the Empire, hard and angular, stiff and naked. The large leathern chair for the prince, which stood in the centre of the room beside an old-fashioned dressing-table, upon which were spread the divers utensils for his approaching toilet, that awoke certain pleasurable reminiscences of the court of Louis Seize and the *toilette du matin* of the beaux and *muscadins* of '89. Near these stood a mahogany bureau, upon which his secretary often wrote while the prince dictated the correspondence even amid the elaborate manœuvres of two valets-de-chambre, which kept him for the moment in a state of discomfort and subjection.

The walls were hung round with portraits. C. told me that they were, without exception, those of *friends*, and I examined the collection with the greatest interest. They were arranged without any attempt at order, neither by age nor date, merely according to the shape of the frame, and the size of the panel, and it was curious to observe the confusion to which such an arrangement had given rise; Alexander the autocrat and Mirabeau the democrat hung side by side, while Fréron and Voltaire gazed at each other with that peculiar smirk which has been so happily denominated the "painter's smile." I was struck with the vast number of female portraits, of all ages and denominations, which met the eye; there was a beautiful crayon drawing of

Madame de Genlis with her harp, and another of Madame de Staël with her book and pencil, and a full-length painting of Madame Roland hung opposite to one of Madame de Lamballe. I glanced over the collection with most intense interest; it was the romantic chapter of the life of M. de Talleyrand, one with which diplomacy and politics had nought to do. "How I should wish you to tell me the history of the individuals whose representations are assembled here," said I to C., who was watching me as I walked leisurely round; "what admirable illustrations to your '*Vie Anecdotique*' they would furnish!"

"Indeed," returned my friend, "the '*Vie Anecdotique*' would scarcely be complete without them. As I have already told you, M. de Talleyrand, from his earliest youth, has relied upon the support and patronage of women. There is scarcely one of these ladies who has not played some part in the advancement of his fortune. You might follow the epochs of his life by the title and social position of his patronesses. You smile; but it is even so. But this sort of *livison* often exists between persons of different sex in France. It is of every kind of friendship the most pure and disinterested; *love* is seldom generated by these attachments: that sentiment would on the one side tend to mar the devotion, and on the other, render the feeling liable to the changes and chances of caprice. I could call to mind numberless examples of this species of allegiance, which, having begun in youth, have continued unto old age, with the same confidence, the same self-sacrifice. Come hither; you will find an apt illustration of my meaning."

He led me to a portrait placed in the shadow of the chimney. "This was the first friend of M. de Talleyrand, when he was a youth just let loose from the *seminaire*, and she whom this picture represents was a woman already advancing to maturity. Surely we cannot suspect the existence of love *there*. This lady, whose name was so long associated with every early success of the prince, when he was still Abbé de Périgord, was the celebrated Comtesse de Brionne, the mother of the un-

fortunate Princess de Lamballe, and grandmother of the present King of Sardinia. She was the first to distinguish the merit of the young abbé, and by her influence to maintain him in his position in spite of the dislike manifested towards him by the court of Marie Antoinette. Even lately I heard him speak of her in terms of intense gratitude and affection; and his voice, usually so deep and grave, faltered as he recounted to me the story of her death. She was among the first emigrants after the breaking out of the revolution, and retired to the Austrian dominions, having, by permission of the emperor, assumed the title of Princess of Lorraine. There she lived in poverty and obscurity for some years, resisting every effort made by M. de Talleyrand to obtain forgiveness for what she deemed his *crime* in having deserted his caste and renounced his profession, to adopt the principles of the revolution.

“ Among the little circle of devoted friends who had gathered round her in her exile, the conduct of M. de Talleyrand was frequently the subject of conversation, and she has been heard to declare that his defection had given her more pain than many sorrows which ought to have touched her more nearly. In the year 1805, when M. de Talleyrand, then in the zenith of his favour with Napoleon, accompanied the latter on his famous tour of ‘mediation’ into Austria, he repaired to the little town of Linz, where the princess had chosen her retreat, expressly to obtain an interview, with the hope of soothing her into forgetfulness of his errors. The letter which he despatched from the inn where he alighted, was a model of grace and politeness. He had recalled in its composition all the half-forgotten traditions of courtesy and high-breeding which he had learned in her school. He had flattered her by every expression of gratitude for former favours, appealed to the memory of bygone days, and announced his intention of personally waiting upon her for the answer on the morning following, unless he received a summons to appear before her that same evening.

“ No answer came that night, and accordingly about

twelve on the day following, the prince set forth from the little inn where he had alighted, to gain the small château, situated a short league from the town, where the princess resided, full of doubt, and already somewhat disappointed at not having received, in reply to his letter, even so much as a cold permission to present himself before her. He had attired himself in a costume which should recal to her mind as much as possible the period of their first acquaintance, having carefully laid aside every token of the rank which he held at the court of the usurper, resolving that nothing in his person or demeanour should shock the taste and feelings of his friend. He has often owned to me that his heart beat with such violence as he drew near the château which the guide pointed out to him as that occupied by the princess, that he felt half inclined to turn back, and to leave his errand unaccomplished until he had received some token of the oblivion of his errors, which he had been at so much pains to seek.

“ At length, the carriage stopped before the gate of a ruinous-looking building, which stood on the brow of the hill outside the town. M. de Talleyrand alighted, and walked up to the iron gate which looked into the fore-court, for he thought it might appear more discreet and in better taste to avoid every semblance of state and ceremony. He wished to bring to her mind the Abbe de Perigord alone, and hoped she might forget what he had become since then. The whole place wore a wild and desolate aspect, and the silence alarmed him. Not a soul was stirring about the premises, and what was still more extraordinary, was the circumstance of the shutters being all closed, although it was bright noon-day.

“ He pulled the bell with a violent effort, and it sent forth that hollow, melancholy sound which is so peculiar to a deserted building. The summons was answered by an old portress, who hobbled to the gate with lagging pace, and eyes red and swollen with weeping, while, close at her heels, followed the old dog, whom he recognised on the instant, as old Vaillant, who used to run so joyously down the steps of the *perron* to meet him when he entered the courtyard of the hotel of Madame

de Brionne in Paris. But the animal knew him no longer, for he barked and growled with savage fury at every token of recognition, and the woman only sobbed the louder in answer to his inquiries.

“ ‘The princess was *gone*!’ she said. ‘She had departed but a few hours before. She had left the château with all her retinue, and she feared that her highness would never return!’ M. de Talleyrand has described the pang of that moment as being one of the most bitter that he has ever experienced throughout his whole life; and he remained for an instant silent from emotion. The woman drew from her pocket a letter which she said was to be delivered to the gentleman who had written from Linz on the evening before, and who was to call for the answer. The prince took it in silence, not daring even to gaze upon its contents until alone. He re-entered the carriage, and drove towards the town, and it was not until the château was lost to sight, and the barking of old Vaillant was heard no more, that he mustered courage sufficient to break the seal, and open the envelope.

“ It contained nought but his own letter—not a word, not a syllable in explanation. He turned to the superscription, and then no longer felt astonishment. It was addressed to the ‘*Prince de Benevent, Ministre de Napoleon, Empereur des Français.*’ Every word was underlined; the meaning was clear. Such a person was unknown to the Princesse de Lorraine! In spite of her advanced age and feeble health—in spite of the assurance of protection which Napoleon had vouchsafed to her on his approach, she had fled from the place rather than meet him who had deceived all her hopes, and fallen so low (to use her own expression) as ‘to serve as footstool to enable the usurper to sit more at his ease upon the throne of the Bourbons.’ She returned no more to Linz even after the departure of Napoleon, but fixed her residence at Presburg; and when M. de Talleyrand repaired to Vienna to assist at the famous congress of 1814, his friendship made him forget his former repulse, and once more did he solicit more humbly, more passionately

than before, for pardon and reconciliation. This time the appeal was not in vain : he had returned to the good and righteous cause ; he had once more re-entered the *voie sacrée*, and she answered him in her own hand, and by return of courier, bidding him use all despatch, as ‘ the moments now were numbered.’

“ No sooner did the missive reach him, than he set out from Vienna without a moment’s delay, travelling night and day, until he reached Presburg. It was just at the grey peep of dawn when he traversed the streets of that ancient city, but yet he resolved to drive at once, prompted by one of those singular presentiments to which through life he has always listened, to the old palace which the princess now inhabited.

“ How different was his reception from that he had experienced at Linz ! Even at this early hour, servants were standing round the gate ; and as soon as his carriage, with the broad rattling wheels and jingling bells, had turned the corner of the street, the gates were thrown open wide, and the carriage entered at once without impediment. It was evident that he had been expected with impatience, for he was received in silence, as if there had been no time to waste in idle greeting. The old servants whom he remembered did not speak out their welcome, but merely bowed in acknowledgment of his kindly recognition, and hurried him without announcement and without ceremony into the chamber of their mistress.

“ It was not until he stood upon the threshold of that silent chamber and viewed the scene within, that the truth flashed upon his mind—then the reason of the expectation and the silent greeting, of the haste in which he had been ushered into her presence, became evident at once, and he tottered forward to the bed, and fell upon his knees by the side of the priest, whose muttered prayer filled the room with a low mysterious murmur. Madame de Brionne was dying ; her eyes were already closed, and her fingers were already relaxing their grasp of the rosary which lay outside the bed. It seemed as if the repose of death had already stolen over her, when

suddenly, as if a supernatural instinct had warned her of the entrance of M. de Talleyrand, she started up, and gazed at him fixedly; then said, with a sweet, sad smile of affection, as she stretched forth her hand towards him, 'Ah, Monsieur de Perigord, *you alone* can tell how dearly I have loved you!' She sighed deeply, sank back upon the pillow, and before his lips had ceased their pressure upon her outstretched hand, it lay powerless and dead within his own! She had died while the words of tenderness with which she had greeted him were yet upon her lips, and while that smile of recognition yet lingered on her placid countenance. And when M. de Talleyrand rose from that bedside, her form was already straightened beneath the coverlet; the tapers were already lighted round the bed, and the sheet was thrown over her face, concealing it from view, so that he beheld it no more!

"I have always considered this event as one of the most touching episodes in M. de Talleyrand's life. I have heard him speak of Madame de Brionne in terms of the highest veneration, as a woman of the most exalted virtue, and one of the grandest souls he had ever met with, well fitted by nature to be that which fortune had made her—the sister and mother of kings and princes—and there is, perhaps, a little remorse mingled with the regret with which he laments the loss of her society during so many years. Her advice had guided and sustained his youth; it might, perhaps, have aided him in his maturer age; and, while he was at the height of his power and influence during the empire, he has often surprised, in his own mind, a slight feeling of uneasiness respecting the sentiment with which Madame de Brionne would peruse the journals wherein his name was mentioned in connexion with that of the emperor. I think that the tie which bound him to Madame de Brionne must have been the only one by which he suffered his soul to be held captive. In other cases, he withstood the influence; in this one alone did he submit to it, perhaps, in fact, scarcely conscious of his slavery.

"The next link in these voluntary bonds was that

woven by beauty and talent combined. Young as he was, he was already too old to be captivated by wit *alone*. The in the world, and were I attempting to represent the prince, not as he really is, but as I should wish to find him, I might gloss over the one spot of this kind which has darkened his career, or endeavour to wipe off the reproach which he has incurred; but I will give you the facts as they really were, leaving you to make your own comments.

“It would appear that, contrary to the usual theory, the fascination entered neither by the eye nor by the ear; it was the result of fanatical admiration of his great powers of mind. This lady was married, at the age of fifteen, to the Count de Flahaut, who was fifty-eight. You will, perhaps, be startled at the coolness with which I mention this; but surely there is some excuse in this unjustifiable union, and the unstability of principle at the time, and it is unfair to separate crime and error from the institutions from which they have arisen. It was not till after the death of her husband, who perished on the scaffold in '92, that she became acquainted with M. de Talleyrand, having been in active correspondence with him during the whole period of his exile, and having saved him, by her timely information of the state of feelings and parties in Paris, from acting with precipitation, and from yielding to the treacherous invitations of false friends, who advised his return to certain destruction. He had received, for many months, regular intimation of all that was passing in the capital. At first he had paid but small attention to these anonymous epistles, but, by degrees, as he beheld the realization of all the previsions put forth by the unknown writer, he took confidence, and resolved to abide by the counsels expressed in the mysterious letters, and so blindly did he rely upon the correctness of the information contained therein, that, being twice upon the point of recrossing the channel, he twice deferred the step in obedience to the advice of his anonymous friend, and each time had cause of rejoicing that he had thus acted.

“Madame Champion, at that time, like himself, an exile in London, was his only confidante in this affair, and to her alone did he communicate his embarrassment touching the author of the correspondence. I have spoken to you before, about the singular fatality which has sometimes attended upon the steps of M. de Talleyrand, and which must be attributable to his surprising memory and great powers of observation. In this instance did he once more experience its influence, and by its aid alone, I have often heard him declare, did he discover the name and station of his benefactor.

“He had one day been speaking with Madame Champion upon the subject, and in his perplexity was enumerating the relations whose affection could be likely thus to render them vigilant and clear-sighted; she had called over successively every degree of relationship—*aunt, uncle, cousin, brother.* But to every new suggestion, M. de Talleyrand discovered some well-founded objection, until, at last, Madame Champion cried, laughingly, ‘Well, it is evident, then, you have, as in the good old fairy tales, some wise and powerful *Marraine.*’ M. de Talleyrand shook his head. ‘Alas, Madame, neither *Marraine* nor *Filleul,*’ returned he, quoting from Beaumarchais’s ‘*Figaro,*’ and the subject dropped.

“It was soon after this that the unknown friend advised his return to Paris, and, as he had hitherto found benefit in following the counsels thus conveyed, he hesitated not in this instance. Upon his arrival in the capital, he found everything in the state in which he had been led to expect it, and his greeting was such as to make him rejoice that he had not lingered in the execution of the step suggested by his well-wisher. After this, he was indefatigable in his researches. He kept the adventure no secret, but told it in every circle he frequented; hoping thereby to obtain some clue to the discovery of his benefactor. He felt sure that the letters were written by a female, not from the handwriting, nor from any peculiar refinement of style, but from the singular mixture of boldness and timidity which was evident in every line. The deep interest

expressed for his safety, and yet the kind of awkward fear lest this interest should be exaggerated in the mind of the reader; in short, whether it was that the conviction of M. de Talleyrand led him to believe that such disinterested sentiment could emanate from none but a woman, I know not, but it is certain that never did his suspicion light on an individual of the other sex, while, from the very moment of his return to Paris, did he begin to look around among the women of his acquaintance, and to fix suspicion upon each, until further research displayed the futility of his surmises.

“He had already been for some time at Paris without being able to obtain a clue whereby to form any probable conjectures upon the subject, when, one evening, being by chance at a *soirée* given by Barras, his attention was attracted to a young lady whom he had at first observed with that languid indifference with which one is too apt to survey a stranger, where there is nothing in particular to arrest the attention. M. de Talleyrand had been standing, half hid by a curtain, in a recess of one of the windows, talking to Count Réal, and the lady had left her seat at the further end of the room, to take one close beside him. He had paid but slight attention to this circumstance, and after the departure of Réal, went to join the group of talkers assembled in the doorway.

“He had not been here many moments, before he observed the same pale lady in deep black move stealthily from the place which she had occupied, and where she had been listening with glistening eyes and heaving bosom to the various questions of interest which he had been debating, and again seat herself close to his side. M. de Talleyrand, struck with the pertinacity with which she seemed to follow his movements, was naturally led to examine her with more attention. She was of small stature, and delicate in feature, with eyes of most peculiar lustre, and the sable weeds in which she was attired added to the interest inspired by her youth and pallid countenance. ‘Who is that lady?’ asked M. de Talleyrand, abruptly, of the person with

whom he was conversing. The lady blushed deep as scarlet. It was evident that she had heard the question. ‘She is the widow of the Count de Flahaut,’ was the reply; but it conveyed no association to the memory of M. de Talleyrand, and he shook his head, endeavouring to recal to mind the name at the old court, when suddenly his informant continued, ‘You surely must remember her marriage? It is not so very long ago. She was a Demoiselle *Filleul*, a name of no importance—second-rate provincial *hobereaux*.’

“The word acted like magic upon the whole nervous system of M. de Talleyrand. By some unaccountable chain of thought, the laughing observation of Madame Champion recurred to his mind, and he inquired more fully concerning the lady. Everything he heard tended to confirm the idea which had so strangely taken possession of his mind with regard to her identity with his unknown protector. His first step, of course, was to get himself presented to her. And how could he, with his tact and observation, fail to perceive the strong emotion visible in her manner of acknowledging his attentions, and the faltering, unsteady voice in which she answered his seemingly careless, though strictly polite address? He steadfastly avoided, however, in this first interview, any allusion to his journey to London or to his return—he was fearful of creating embarrassment—fearful of exciting alarm or suspicion of his real motive for seeking her acquaintance, and he was aware of the necessity for prudence and discretion. He despatched a note the next morning to inquire at what hour he might be permitted to present himself at the lady’s house. This was done designedly.

“The handwriting of the few lines of cold politeness which he received in answer, confirmed at once the bold hope he had entertained; and he hurried to the appointment, with what feelings of tenderness and gratitude may well be imagined. In all the conversations which I have held with him upon the subject, he has never been led into betraying the particulars of this interview—no one can tell how he first broke to the lady

the discovery he had made, nor how she received his warm and trembling thanks; but from that hour her spirit had found its master, and bowed to his own, held captive and enslaved.

"The faith and devotion of the fair young countess were never belied through the long years of trial and vicissitude which followed; and instances are recorded of her risking hopes of fame and fortune, nay, her very life itself, to aid the prince in the struggle against destiny which he had so bravely undertaken. She twice made the journey to England alone, without protection, going round by way of Holland, to serve him; and when, by the sale of her first novel in England, she had realized a small sum of money, it was shared with him, who, she declared to the latest hour of her life, had more right to it than she herself, for he it was who had caused her to exercise the talent which Heaven had bestowed, and the existence of which she would never have known had it not been for the taste and cultivation which he had imparted.

"Their double marriage was a double error, which has never been satisfactorily accounted for, and which must remain a secret. In the case of the lady it brought rank and affluence, but neither ease of mind nor happiness, while in that of the prince, which *followed* soon after, the consequences were humiliation and disappointment."

"Oh!" said I, "you must surely have something to tell me concerning the marriage of the prince? That is one of the greatest events of his life, and one which has puzzled his biographers more than his most ambiguous proceedings."

"The world has been unjust to Madame de Talleyrand," replied C. "I knew her for many years, and she was far from being the fool which it has pleased the public to consider her. M. de Talleyrand himself, amid all his good-humoured quotations of her *bêtise*, or absence of mind, cannot help pausing to commend the great tact and admirable *esprit de conduite* which made her, during those years when he was in high office under

Napoleon's government, an invaluable aid and ally by the manner in which she practised that most difficult art, so highly prized by the French, *l'art de tenir son salon*. This, to a man of M. de Talleyrand's tastes, might be of much more importance than the *bon mots* of Madame de Staël, or the stately dignity of Madame Recamier. Look at yonder portrait by the side of the window, and you can judge of the beauty which had power to fascinate a man so *difficile* and *blazé* as M. de Talleyrand."

C. drew aside the blue silk curtain which shaded the casement, in order to throw a full light upon the picture of which he spoke, and I was positively startled at the heavenly beauty of the countenance thus disclosed. It was indeed lovely; and I felt at once that no further explanation was necessary to account for the step which had excited so much astonishment and so much condemnation.

"However, many reasons did exist more worthy both of M. de Talleyrand himself and of the object of his choice; and in spite of all that has gone abroad respecting his caprice, I have ever found that those who had known her longest, loved her most. I have myself heard M. de Talleyrand recount the story of their first meeting, which he did with most exquisite relish, smacking strongly of the good old times of Lauzun and Richelieu, and not a whit the less amusing for all that. It was one of the most memorable evenings in the whole private life of Monsieur de Talleyrand. He had been attending the debates of the *Manège*, and, harassed and wearied with the vast farrago of nonsense which he had heard poured forth for so many hours, was returning home, with the intention of going early to bed, when, in the middle of the street, his arm was seized by one of his old associates, the Chevalier de Fénélon, who, according to custom, was hurrying to the *faro-table*, and who pressed M. de Talleyrand to join him, declaring that he had spent the day in combinations and calculations to ensure winning, and that he was convinced that if he could only put them to the proof that very night, he was *en reine* to break every *faro* bank in Paris. It

needed but little persuasion perhaps to induce M. de Talleyrand, in the frame of mind in which he then was, to yield to the temptation, and he followed the chevalier with no feeling save that of curiosity, never intending to play himself that night, but to act merely as spectator of the wondrous success of his companion. The house chosen by the latter as theatre of his anticipated exploits was the *tripot* in the Palais Royal, known even then as the famous '*Cent Treize*.'

"Fénelon, whose reliance on his own resources was proverbial, seated himself at the long roulette-table with perfect ease and confidence, while M. de Talleyrand, who knew the deplorable state of his friend's finances at the time, stood behind him, trembling for his fate, and watching with anxiety every roll of the balls, every slide of the shovel. One — two — three passes had been played, however, and the chevalier, according to his own anticipation, won on, consulting at each call from the croupier the slip of paper which he held in his hand, and upon which were scrawled his calculations concerning the chances of the game. This success did not at first attract any extraordinary attention. Examples of luck in the outset were but too common; but when hit after hit was made, and still the chance remained the same, whispers began to float around the table that all was not fair and as it should be. The chevalier heeded not the effect that his extraordinary run of luck had produced, but continued in silence to sweep the gold into a heap before him, regarding perhaps with an undue share of that malicious enjoyment in which it was his wont to indulge, the astonishment and discomfiture of his opponents.

"It was evident that this state of things could not last long; the murmurs of the players, the manifest terror of the bankers, were beginning to disturb the game, when presently one of the croupiers came between the friends, and with pale and trembling lips whispered in the ear of the winner a few words which made him start. A warm conversation, still in the same mysterious whisper, was for a few moments carried

on between them; and finally, after various signs of supplication on the part of the croupier, and of doubt and hesitation on the part of the chevalier, it was announced to the assembled players that M. de Fénélon would retire from the contest upon payment of the sum still left in the bank, which could be subscribed among them, and thus diminish the loss to each so as to be scarcely felt by any.

“This singular proposition, unheard of in the annals of the gaming-table, was received with the most profound indignation and astonishment on the part of the losers, but Fénélon himself undertook to prove that they could not lose, but must be the gainers, as his *veine* would most assuredly break the bank at the next roll of the balls. After some few uncouth exclamations on the part of the gentlemen, and a little pouting on the part of the ladies, the matter was carried. Fénélon was ‘paid off’ by a subscription, and dismissed with many a muttered curse from the honest and reputable assembly.

“Upon leaving the gaming-house, the chevalier’s joy became uproarious, and he trod the silent streets, reeling with laughter at the whimsical trick which Dame Fortune had condescended to play him. He chinked the gold in his pockets until it rang again, and made his companion dread lest the sound should be overheard by any of those nocturnal marauders with whom the streets of Paris at that time abounded. He even threw a handful of the coin down the grating of a cellar, for the sake of wondering what the occupants of the miserable hole would think of such good luck when they should awake the next morning. M. de Talleyrand, who never could endure any kind of midnight brawling, was right glad when they had reached the residence of his friend, and wished him good night with hearty goodwill, content to be rid of his uncouth laughter and joyless gaiety.

“But Fénélon was not at all disposed to acquiesce in his friend’s desire for rest and quiet. The excess of good fortune had wrought the same effect as an excess of wine. He was as much excited as though he had

been drinking the whole night; and when it came to the parting at his own door, he would not hear of M. de Talleyrand's returning without recruiting his strength for the remainder of his walk by a libation in honour of the propitious fates. Had it been day-light, he would have immediately laid out the whole of his winnings in some wild and fanciful gala to his friends. M. de Talleyrand needed some little pressing to enter. He was tired and sleepy; giddy, too, with the noise and rattle of his companion, and longed to be at home and to be at rest. However, there was no resistance possible, and before he could even form an excuse for retiring, he found himself comfortably seated in the *roué's* own private sanctum, whither few of his sex, and certainly none of his calling, had ever penetrated before. Champagne was now called for; the rouleaux were displayed in piles upon the table; every taper in the girandoles was lighted; a roaring fire was soon kindled on the hearth; the clock on the mantel-piece, which marked two, was stopped by a jerk from the chevalier's finger; and the cards were brought from the drawer of a book-case in the corner of the chimney.

"M. de Talleyrand was but little prepared for the excitement of cards; the very sight of them was sickening, after the long hours spent at the *tripot*, and he at once declined the game, expressing his intention of withdrawing without further delay, as he had much business to transact in the morning. But Fénélon laughed, as well he might, for none ever escaped who had once fallen into his clutches, and he filled the glasses with champagne, all the while sorting and dealing the cards for piquet, as if his friend had not uttered a word; then looked at his game, called out "seven for a point," and tossed off a bumper, while he waited for the answer. This *sang-froid* was irresistible. M. de Talleyrand, although grumbling at his own fatigue and the lateness of the hour, took up the cards spread out before him, and was soon interested in the chances of the game, which seemed at first to be as much in favour of his

adversary, as they had been already at the Rouge et Noir table.

“‘What are our stakes?’ said Fénélon, presently; ‘it is for you to propose, as the luck seems to be all mine to-night.’ ‘They must be small, indeed,’ said M. de Talleyrand, drawing out his purse, which contained but little, and throwing it carelessly on the table. ‘Done!’ cried the chevalier, turning its contents out upon the green cloth. ‘Come, courage; double or quits until morning!’ This first trial of skill was in a few moments decided in his favour, and he swept the contents of the purse, as he had done the louis-d’ors of the gaming-house, into his own heap, which seemed destined to grow monstrous.

“M. de Talleyrand played on, and grew more resolute as his adversary grew more ironical and insolent. He lost his watch; his chain and seals; the ring which he had saved amid all his embarrassment and poverty, during his uncertain wanderings in foreign climes; he lost the very buckles off his shoes, and the knee-clasps from his inexpressibles, and at last rose from the table, declaring that he must now go home, as he had nothing more to lose. ‘Pardon me,’ laughed the chevalier, ‘you have yet another stake against which I have no objection to venture this heap of gold, without counting.’ M. de Talleyrand still denied the possession of any article of value; but the chevalier pointed to his breast-pin—a long gilt pin, surmounted by one of those scarlet berries with a black spot at the extremity, which we call *grains rouges d’Amérique*. M. de Talleyrand objected that the article was not worth a franc; scarcely, indeed, a few sous. It had been the gift of a negress at Philadelphia, and it was by a singular mistake that he had placed it in his bosom, instead of the one of great value which he usually wore. He had changed his dress at twilight, and, in passing his hand over the toilet-cushion, had drawn forth the trumpery ornament which he now displayed, instead of the emerald he had apparently mislaid when he had changed his cravat. The

circumstance, which had been considered a freak on his part, had even attracted the attention of a neighbour at the club, who had pointed it out to him, and who had been much amused by the surprise which the discovery had occasioned.

“M. de Talleyrand vainly urged the utter worthlessness of the trinket. The chevalier was in high glee, and, insisting upon its following the rest of the spoils, placed it beside the goodly heap of gold upon the table, chuckling all the while with that irritating irony, which would long before have dashed into fury any temper less calm than that of his companion. But M. de Talleyrand laughed with him, and, as he disengaged the pin from the plaits of his neckcloth, merely related how that, having saved the black cook at the house where he lodged, at Philadelphia, from a severe punishment, she had given him this bauble as a precious remembrance of her gratitude. It had been charmed by the Obeah man, she had told him, and was considered a talisman against evil fortune.

“‘It has not answered to-night, at all events,’ exclaimed the chevalier. ‘The devil’s charm which *you* carry is stronger than the Obeah-man’s!’ replied M. de Talleyrand; and they began their game once more. The cards were this time more favourable; but Fénélon lost the hard-fought battle with good grace, and whistled merrily as he cut the cards to his adversary. How shall I tell you what followed? It seems so strange a tale, that you will hesitate to believe it, and yet I give you my honour that it is true. The first game was won by M. de Talleyrand—the first during the whole evening; and it was with a nervous eagerness that he snatched up his trumpery pin, leaving the gold which the chevalier had staked to be doubled in the next hand, for again was Talleyrand the winner. The tide of fortune had turned. He went on winning, without intermission, until near daylight, when the whole of the gold which had been won at the gaming-house was transferred from the pocket of the chevalier to that of his friend!

“M. de Talleyrand had several times requested leave

to depart, but Fénélon had obstinately refused to allow him to withdraw, so long as there remained a single louis on the board or a single trinket in his possession. It was five o'clock when the adversaries at length rose, M. de Talleyrand embarrassed with his success, the chevalier mortified and crest-fallen, when the latter, with a sudden inspiration, thumping his fist upon the table, exclaimed, 'One more trial, and I have done! I *must* have that confounded breast-pin! By all the powers, the Obeah-man was right; it is that which brings the luck!'

" 'But what have you to stake against a trinket of so much value?' returned M. de Talleyrand, endeavouring to laugh away the impression which, in spite of himself, the occurrences of the evening had made upon his mind. 'Look round the room,' was the answer, 'choose any article you like; I feel sure that this time I shall win it; for it was when you were at your wit's end that fortune changed!'

" M. de Talleyrand looked round the room, but it was only for form's sake. He had already in his own mind chosen his booty. It was a small silver urn, of antique form and most delicate workmanship. Its weight and value did not seem very great, neither was it chiselled or adorned in any manner, but its form was so graceful and elegant, its proportions so exquisite, that it could not fail to attract the eye of a connoisseur, and he named it with less compunction, from a knowledge of the smallness of its intrinsic value. The moment he mentioned it, however, all the desperate gaiety of the chevalier seemed to have received a sudden check. He started, and set down the glass he was about to raise to his lips, and, looking full and steadily into the face of his companion, while, however, his lips quivered slightly, and his voice was much subdued, he answered, 'You have fixed upon the only thing from which I cannot—I dare not part. I could not risk the loss of that little vase were all the riches in the universe staked against it.'

" M. de Talleyrand was much astonished to find that there was anything in the world to which Fénélon at-

tached importance, and rallied him upon the discovery ; but, surprising to say, this jest was not met by the usual spirited rejoinder. His companion answered not, but calling for more champagne, swallowed a tremendous bumper at a single draught.

“ M. de Talleyrand, of course, could offer no objection to this reasoning, and with a heavy purse and lightened heart he bade his friend good night, and left the room. Scarcely, however, had he reached the outer door of the apartment, when the valet-de-chambre, who had been fast asleep in the ante-chamber, came running after him, with a request from his master that he would return. The chevalier was standing over the fire, leaning against the chimney, and clasping the urn, which he had taken from the book-case where it had reposed, close to his heart. In an instant, M. de Talleyrand could perceive that the bottle which he had left upon the table was now emptied ; and, as Fénelon turned towards him, he was startled at beholding his discomposed and agitated countenance. ‘ I have changed my mind,’ said he ; ‘ this may be to me what the pin is to you. I have resolved to try its magic influence against that which has protected you. Speak not a word—ask me no question—I shall deem the slightest remark as a summons to meet you in the *Bois de Boulogne*, with witnesses and loaded weapons.’ ”

“ M. de Talleyrand did as he was requested : he placed his *cupon* before him ; but he observed that Fénelon grasped the urn with trembling fingers, until compelled to loose his hold in order to survey his game. A frightful oath—frightful from the compressed energy with which it was uttered—flew from his white lips as he looked at his cards ; and, with the instinct of an experienced gamester, beheld his fate. By a really extraordinary chance, it so happened that this time the cards held by M. de Talleyrand were what he calls *fabuleuses*—*pique*, *repique* and *capot* were carried in the one hand, and the chevalier sat amazed and stupified, not having been called upon to count a single point. He rose from the table in desperation, and seized the urn, which M.

de Talleyrand remarked he had removed from the table with almost religious care when the game began, and handed it to his friend, but at arm's length, and with averted gaze. The prince had not courage to pursue the torture, and he said, as he waved it back, 'Do not press me to accept the trinket, M. de Fénélon. Take it, I beseech you, as a gift from me; 'twill be but an earnest of the rest of all I have won of you, for you are sure to have it back again. You know well that I always succeed in keeping my winnings just long enough to make the loss of them more severely felt.'

" 'No!' returned the chevalier, fiercely; 'what is lost is lost. It is your right to keep the bauble, and I ask favour of no man. Away with it, then! To demur in taking up your lawful gains is to give offence to the loser.'

" 'Well, as you like,' returned the prince; 'but remember, I hold the urn at your disposal should you alter your determination.'

" He took the vase, and placed it beneath his coat. The wistful gaze of the chevalier smote him to the very heart; but, after the fierce manner in which his attention had been received, he sought no second rebuke, and was about to depart; when suddenly, to his great surprise and alarm, the chevalier rushed forward and tore it from his grasp, exclaiming, in a tone of the most bitter rage, 'By the lord, I am a fool. I played for nought but the urn. 'Twas the urn alone I lost. You cannot deny that'—and he cast a furious glance towards his astonished guest; 'you said not a word of the *contents*. They are mine by every law; you *dare* not say 'tis otherwise. I defy you to tell me that I spoke of its *contents*.'

" M. de Talleyrand answered not; he was appalled at sight of this sudden outburst of fury, and Fénélon having, with trembling fingers, succeeded in tearing open the lid which covered the little vase, and dashed it with a violent effort against the side of the chimney, a slender column of dark-coloured ashes, almost impalpable, fell through the small aperture into the fire, where it blazed with a small sparkling blue flame for a single moment,

then smouldered into darkness, leaving behind a strong aromatic odour, which seemed to hang heavily on the atmosphere of the room, causing a sensation of sickness and a dimness of the sight. Even this died away before the chevalier had ceased gazing at the spot where the substance had fallen : and M. de Talleyrand, embarrassed, and fearful of giving further offence in the strange mood in which his companion was, once more slowly took up the urn and sought the door. He could not avoid turning back to catch one last glance of the Chevalier de Fénélon. He was leaning with his elbows on the mantelpiece, and his forehead buried in his hands. The bright light from the tapers in the girandoles fell full upon his countenance, and *struck upon the tears* which were rolling down his cheeks, causing them to sparkle and to glisten as they fell.

“ The prince closed the door noiselessly, and descended the stairs, full of a solemn wonder at what he had beheld. He grasped the urn with a nervous energy beneath his mantle, and with a trembling dread did he pause beneath the first lamp which hung suspended above the causeway, to examine it more closely, inspired by a far different interest from that with which he had hitherto beheld it. He turned it again and again to the light, but could discern no inscription whereby to gain a clue to guess at its former destination ; the same sickening odour of scented oils and aromatic spices greeted him from the unclosed aperture, and it was still heated almost to burning by the careless manner in which the chevalier had held it to the fire, when shaking out its mysterious contents.

“ He was about to abandon the search, when by accident, having turned it to replace it in his bosom, a few letters, traced beneath the pedestal, met his eye ; he lifted it to the light of the lantern, and read them more distinctly. A few particles of the same dark dust which Fénélon had shaken forth, dropped from the vase upon his hand, and he blew them off with hasty impatience, nor heeded where they fell. The letters traced upon the silver were in relief. To a stranger they would have

indicated nothing, but to M. de Talleyrand they were pregnant with a deep and frightful meaning :

“ *C. II.—March 17th.*

“ **MERCY AND FORGIVENESS !—MISERERE !**”

“ In an instant, he remembered the story which had been afloat some time before, and which he had treated as an old wife’s tale. The beautiful young Countess H——; her husband’s jealousy—his violent death by the hand of the chevalier—the wife’s despair, and retirement to the convent at Louvaine—her subsequent death and legacy to Fénélon, which had caused such condemnation and astonishment. ‘ Let my body be opened after death,’ said she, in her will, ‘ and let the heart which has beat but for him be reduced to ashes, and let it be thus conveyed to him, so that, when he dies, it may repose within his coffin, for it is his own.’ She it was who had designed the vase—she who had chosen the inscription.

“ The memory of this event had passed away, and the salons of Paris had been occupied with other subjects of more stirring import; but the whole story burst at once, with all its attendant circumstances of horror, upon the stricken memory of the prince. The dark stream of ashes and the aromatic odour—the coincidence of the initials and the date—and then the tears which had been wrung even from those eyes, burning and bloodshot with riot and debauchery—it was evident that the story which had been told, and which he had doubted when every one else believed, was too true. He replaced the vase within the folds of his mantle with a feeling of disgust and hatred towards the cold-blooded *roué*, whose rage for gaming and excitement had led him to commit this sacrilegious deed. He inwardly resolved that no temptation should induce him ever again to associate with the reckless libertine—a promise, however, which he was not very long called upon to keep; for, soon after this adventure, the chevalier was found one morning dead in

his bed, having swallowed a strong dose of corrosive acid: fit termination to his wild, unprincipled career."

"And what became of the silver urn?" said I.

"M. de Talleyrand, with true delicacy of feeling, sent it the very next day to the Marquise de Cossé, an old convent friend of the unfortunate victim, and she, I believe, took the proper means of restoring it to the family."

"And the mysterious pin? Have you ever seen it?"

"I have," replied C., laughing aloud: "at least, when I asked the prince concerning its fate, I was shown a long brassy-looking object, from which all gilding had long ago vanished, and was told that the magical berry had been lost in his various peregrinations. 'Perhaps,' observed he, 'it was stolen by some one who knew its value.' But as the remark was accompanied by the peculiar dropping of the lip and deadening of the eye with which he usually ventures upon a *mystification*, I knew well what to think, and questioned him no more."

My friend paused after he had concluded this strange story, and, beginning to fear lest he had been led away from the original purport of the tale, I reminded him that he had not yet explained to me the particulars of that first interview with Madame Grandt, which had had such a powerful effect on the destinies of the after-life of the prince.

"It was indeed a fitful night," said C.; "one of those wherein the superstitious might easily believe that the devil is allowed to walk abroad, and mingle his curse with the vain projects of aspiring man. It had begun for M. de Talleyrand with a scene of purgatory—it ended with a vision of heaven."

"He hastened home, full of the stormy emotions of the interview with Fénélon, and the strange and almost terrific discovery he had made beneath the lantern in the Rue de Montpensier. He was harassed and fatigued; and, eager to gain the quiet and solitude of his own chamber, was hurrying to repose, when—judge of his annoyance—his servant informed him that a lady was waiting to receive him in his study, whose business was of so much importance, that having called late in

the evening with the hope of finding him at home, she had preferred awaiting his return, even although it should not take place until dawn, so great was her fear of losing the interview she had come so far to obtain.

“It was thus with more vexation than curiosity that M. de Talleyrand entered, therefore, the study—where the stranger, according to the account of the servant, had already been awaiting him for *five* long mortal hours!—without any of the *prestige* which had usually accompanied his introduction to a stranger of the softer sex—perhaps even *his* calm temper a little ruffled at the unseasonable hour and the unexpected *corvée*.

“The shaded lamp upon the chimney-piece threw but a dim light around the room, and some few moments elapsed before he could even perceive the lady, who was seated in the large arm-chair by the fire, her figure enveloped in the mantle worn at the time, wide but not long, reaching only to the knees, and displaying the gauze and gold tissue of the ball-dress worn beneath. It was evident that the fair stranger, exhausted with fatigue and watching, had fallen into a sleep so sound, that not even the entrance of M. de Talleyrand, nor his approach, nor his convenient fit of coughing, had power to rouse her. A letter addressed to himself lay upon the table, and he opened it, hoping that the noise which he made in moving to and fro would awaken her. It was a letter from Montrond, introducing to his acquaintance the bearer, Madame Grandt, who wished to confer with him upon urgent business, and to seek his advice in an affair, concerning which none but himself could give information.

“The name of Madame Grandt immediately awakened all the dormant curiosity of M. de Talleyrand, and he now turned towards the fair stranger with a feeling of interest far different from that which he had experienced on his entrance. He had heard much of her extraordinary beauty, and had long desired the opportunity of judging whether the reputation were well earned. The whole scene was unique of its kind, and never before had M. de Talleyrand felt so much embarrassment as

when the servant, after having in vain endeavoured by every innocent artifice to awaken the lady, left the room, with an ill-suppressed titter at the novelty of the situation in which his master was placed. The noise of the door, however, which the cunning varlet took care to close with as loud a report as possible, succeeded at last in awaking the fair stranger, who started to her feet, surprised and terrified to find herself thus discovered in slumber by a stranger, whom, however, she instantly knew to be M. de Talleyrand, from the description which she had already received of his appearance. The impression he produced upon her mind, startled and alarmed as she was at the moment, was one of awe and veneration, while the effect which she created in his was that of admiration so intense, that he has called it instantaneous devotion.

“Madame Grandt was at that time in the full zenith of her beauty, and of the kind of loveliness most rare and most admired in France. I have heard that she was of English origin. This is not true. Her maiden name was Dayot, and she was born at L’Orient; but her connexion with India, where a great part of her family resided, and the peculiar character of her beauty, would seem to have been the groundwork of the supposition. She was tall, and, at that time, slight in person, with that singular ease and languor in her carriage which have been considered the peculiar attributes of the creole ladies. Her features were of that soft and delicate mould but seldom seen in Europe; her eyes, large and languishing, were of the deepest black, while her hair played in curls of brightest gold upon a forehead of dazzling whiteness, pure and calm as that of an infant. Throughout her whole person was spread a singularly childlike grace, which at once interested the beholder infinitely more than the sublime beauty which distinguished her great rivals for the admiration of the worshippers of fashion at that day, Madame Tallien and Madame Beauharnais.

“M. de Talleyrand, who, with remarkable independence of spirit, talks of the princess without the slightest

prejudice, observed to me, while describing this scene, that when she first threw aside her hood, and disclosed to view that lovely countenance, all blushing with shame and with surprise, the effect was such that even he, man of the world, *blasé* and *désillusionné* as he already was, felt himself completely deprived, for the moment, of his usual self-possession, and stood before her almost as abashed as she herself. It was some time, indeed, before he recovered sufficient self-command to give utterance to the phrases of politeness usual on such occasions, and to offer his services in whatever manner would facilitate the business concerning which she had sought him at this hour.

“If he had reason to be astonished, first of all, at the singular time of night she had chosen for the execution of her errand, then more astonished still at sight of her wondrous beauty, most of all did he own himself astonished when he came to listen to her description of the purport of her unseasonable visit. With the *naïf* credulity which suited so well with the childlike beauty I have already remarked, she proceeded to relate to him, with much trembling and with tears, all the alarm she had experienced upon hearing the report which had been afloat at the assembly at Madame Hamelin’s, (where she had been spending the evening,) concerning Buonaparte’s intended invasion of England, and his promise of delivering up the Bank to pillage as a reward to his successful soldiery. So great, indeed, had been her terror at this news, that she had involuntarily let slip a secret which she had hitherto most religiously kept—that, in fact, she had long ago lodged the greater part of her fortune, and the whole of her plate and jewels, in this very Bank of England, which Buonaparte had so generously promised to abandon to the pillage of his victorious troops as the reward of their valour.’ This announcement had been received at the assembly with shouts of laughter; and again did she burst forth in bitter weeping, when complaining of the cruelty displayed towards her by such untimely levity.

“So great was the power of her tears, that M. de

Talleyrand began to press more than ever to be informed in what manner he could be of service in this matter. She then intimated to him, that at sight of her grief two or three of her tried and valued friends, foremost of whom stood M. de Montrond, had recommended to her to hurry immediately to M. de Talleyrand, for that he alone had power to save her property; that, from his situation, he could even make himself responsible for its safe delivery into her hands; and for this purpose M. de Montrond had immediately penned the letter which she had brought, begging her to fly with it immediately to his house, and not on any account to leave it until she had obtained the guarantee.

“Although, of course, highly diverted at the mystification, and somewhat embarrassed at the situation in which he found himself, yet M. de Talleyrand was too gallant to disclose to the fair lady that she had been the dupe of her own fears and of Montrond’s insatiable love of practical fun; and, in order to quiet her nerves, he instantly drew up in due form a security, signed and sealed, for the safe delivery of her plate and jewels into the hands of any person she might choose to appoint to receive them, as soon as ever Buonaparte’s triumphal army had entered the City of London. The fair applicant, highly delighted at the success of her petition, left the house, reading again and again with confidence the writing he had given her, and perfectly insensible to all his gallantry and admiration amid the joy inspired by his kind proceeding.

“Such is the history of the first interview of M. de Talleyrand with Madame Grandt. I know it to be true, for I had it from the lips of the prince himself, who enters with the keenest relish into the ridicule of the whole scene, sparing himself as little as the princess. The mystification was completely successful. Madame Grandt was fooled to the top of her bent by the perpetrators; but the affair had a far different sequel from that which had been anticipated, for M. de Talleyrand became most passionately attached to the fair solicitor; and to the surprise of all Paris, he who had resisted the

refined beauty of Madame Tallien, the elegance of Madame Recamier, and the wit and fascination of Madame de Staël, fell an easy victim to the more plain and unsophisticated graces of Madame Grandt. It is certain that not one of the ladies who had laid siege to his heart had managed to obtain so strong a hold upon his affections, or to keep them so long; and I can only account for this by the *naïveté*, which gave so strong a tinge of originality to all she said or did, so unlike the slavery to forms and etiquette which must ever influence professed 'women of the world,' such as those by whom he was surrounded.

"So much has been said about her ignorance and stupidity, that they have passed into a proverb, while, in reality, she was neither ignorant nor stupid; but there was certainly an *inexperience* in the social traditions of the world into which she was ushered through the influence of M. de Talleyrand, which gave rise to much amusement among the wits who frequented her society. It would be difficult to account for the strength of the attachment with which, from the very first, she inspired the prince. It certainly was the longest and the strongest that he ever experienced. Various have been the conjectures respecting the causes of his marriage, but the story which was told me by one who was a confidant of the prince at the time is, I think, the best calculated to unravel the mystery which still hangs over it.

"Madame Grandt was, as I have told you, unrivalled in the tact and *convenance* with which she received company, dispensing politeness to each and all alike, contenting every one, and displaying so much cleverness in her management of the fiery spirits who frequented her *salon*, that it was impossible for those who knew her then to deem her either ignorant or foolish. It was this peculiar talent which had induced M. de Talleyrand, who was quick both to perceive any peculiar excellence, and also to turn it to account, to hold his receptions at her house instead of at his *ministère*. He had already done so for some time without having been subjected to

remarks; for the system was, alas! too common at the period to excite the slightest degree either of condemnation or surprise. Fouché, ever on the watch to injure Talleyrand, had taken care to apprise the First Consul of this arrangement. The information, which had excited no interest at the moment, was not wholly lost, however; and a short time afterwards, having been foiled in some of his projects by the policy of England, he sent for Talleyrand, and, puzzled to find a subject which he could use as a pretext for venting his spleen upon his minister, remembered the tale borne by the enemy, Fouché. 'It is no wonder that we are abused and vilified by England,' said he, showing a paper in which appeared a scurrilous article upon the First Consul—'when we expose ourselves to such attacks as these, and even our public ministers give public example of disorder and ill-conduct.' The minister looked his inquiry concerning the meaning of this outburst. 'Yes,' continued Buonaparte, waxing warm, as was his wont, with his own words, like an ill-disciplined schoolboy—'yes, it has reached me that you hold your receptions at Madame Grandt's, and thus the envoys and ambassadors from foreign courts are compelled to wait upon your mistress. This must not continue.' 'Neither shall it,' returned the prince, colouring slightly; 'they shall henceforth be spared; they shall wait no longer on Madame Grandt, but on Madame de Talleyrand; no longer on my mistress, but my wife.'

"The marriage took place before the following week's reception, and it is said that Buonaparte was so vexed and irritated at his own littleness, that he even condescended to *lie* in order to cover it. 'What can have caused Talleyrand's abrupt and extraordinary marriage?' said Barras, one day, soon after the event. 'My *promise* to ask from the Pope "absolution" and the cardinal's hat as a reward for his services,' returned the First Consul, quickly, and immediately changed the conversation.

"Whatever may have been the conduct of Madame Grandt, however reprehensible her facility of morals

before her marriage, it cannot be denied that, from the very hour in which this event took place, it became irreproachable. M. de Talleyrand himself loves to render her every justice on that score. She was too proud of the name she bore ever to disgrace it by any action which she would have deemed unworthy. Like *parvenus* in general, she grew rather intoxicated when arrived at the summit of honour, for, as Princesse de Benevent, her *morgue* and insolence at the court of Napoleon became proverbial, and many amusing anecdotes are told of her absurd pretensions to royal privileges, her pages and her maids of honour, her chamberlain and mistress of the robes.

"I myself once witnessed a curious instance of that total forgetfulness of the '*jadis*,' which seems to be the peculiar failing of persons who have risen from obscurity to rank and fortune. I was one day descending the *perron* of the hotel in the Rue St. Florentine, when a hackney coach entered the court-yard and drove up to the vestibule. I was greatly surprised to behold alighting from it, fine as court robes and towering plumes could make her, the Princesse de Benevent herself. I of course hastened down the steps to offer her my arm on alighting. 'My carriage struck against the lamp-post at the entrance of the Tuileries,' said she, in answer to my inquiring look, 'and the wheel came off. I was forced to return home in this absurd looking vehicle.' Then, turning to the wondering lacqueys, she added, in a tone of disgust and scorn which no language can describe, as she pointed to the coachman, '*Qu'on paie ce malheureux.*' The mixture of the sublime and ridiculous in the tone and gesture by which the words were accompanied was absolutely irresistible.

"To a mild and conciliating nature like that of the prince, and, above all, with his keen sense of the ludicrous, such a disposition must have been peculiarly irritating, added to which, Madame's jealousy of every member of his family to whom he showed affection grew too irksome to be endured, and for their mutual comfort it became advisable to have separate establishments. But even

amid the bitterness and soreness of feeling to which such an arrangement cannot fail to give rise in every family where it unhappily takes place, did the prince, with true generosity and liberality of sentiment, endeavour to render justice to her undeviating devotion to his interests, by making a settlement even too magnificent in proportion to his income, more, in fact, than it could comfortably bear. I frequently saw her after her separation from the prince. So far from having retained either rancour or ill-will against him, there was something touching in the eager interest with which she listened to the slightest details concerning him. She spared not questioning, and seemed never weary of listening to my report of his health and well-being. Everything in her apartment bore witness to her constant remembrance of the days of her happiness and grandeur; the rug before the fire, the embroidered cushion upon which her feet were rested, the lawn handkerchief in her hand, the clock upon the mantelpiece, all bore the impress of the arms of the Talleyrands, and '*Rè que Dieu*' shone forth conspicuously on each; while even the little cage wherein reposed a couple of snow-white dormice displayed, in its mimic dome and tower, a complete model of the château of Valençay.

"She told me, with a frankness I little expected, that she should never cease to regret the life she led here: she could not even speak of the place without tears, and questioned me, with great minuteness, concerning every individual throughout the province—her memory never failing her in the slightest particular with regard to the genealogy of the different families whose estates lie in the neighbourhood of the château. Her heart seemed to yearn towards the prince, and her expressions of admiration concerning his great talents and wonderful powers of mind were affecting in their truthful simplicity. In spite of the want of elevation of soul, which neither nature nor education had imparted, I still think that the prince entertained a real regard for her, and of many a courteous message from him have I myself been the

bearer, whenever it became known at the Hôtel Talleyrand that she was labouring under the slightest indisposition. Towards the latter years of her life, however, her pre-occupation concerning all that passed in his household became one of the greatest sources of petty annoyance to which the prince was subjected. For some time before her death, it amounted, indeed, to positive mania. She insisted upon regulating her establishment entirely upon the model of that of the Rue St. Florentin, ruling the minutest details of her domestic economy in imitation of that observed in the prince's household. She even subjected her own diet and hours of taking her repasts to the same system of imitation, and upon one occasion nearly fell a victim to her over-strict observance of the prince's rule of never taking more than one meal in the day.

"As to the innumerable *naïvetés* and *coqs-à-l'âne* which have gone forth to the world as hers, you must not believe one half of them. I think that many of them were invented under the erroneous impression, that the surest way of annoying M. de Talleyrand would be to ridicule his wife. It is certain that many of the blunders which are laid to her charge bear the unmistakeable stamp of the firm of Montrond and Co. I once attacked the prince upon the subject, and was much amused at the *bonhomie* with which he laughed at the bare remembrance of all the *bêtises* which so many wits had employed themselves in inventing for the poor princess. I asked him if the story, which has gone the round of every newspaper in Europe, about Baron Denon and Robinson Crusoe, were really true. 'It did not actually happen,' replied he, smiling; 'the circumstance did not really occur as it has been represented, for I was there to prevent it. However, it was guessed at, and that was enough; the blunder was ascribed to her without compunction.'

"I certainly remember a *naïveté* which she once uttered in the midst of a circle of savans and literati at Neuilly, which would be considered quite as good and become just as popular were it as generally known.

Lemercier had volunteered after dinner to read us one of his unplayed and unplayable pieces. The company had gathered round him in a circle; his *cahier* lay already unfolded on his knees, and, clearing his voice, he began in a high, shrill tone, which made us all start from our incipient slumber, '*La Scène est à Lyons.*' 'There now, M. de Talleyrand,' exclaimed the princess, jumping from her chair, and advancing towards me with a gesture of triumph, 'now I knew that you were wrong; you would have it that it was the *Saône*.' To describe the embarrassment and consternation of the company would be impossible. I myself was perplexed for an instant, but soon remembered the difference of opinion to which she had alluded. As our carriage was crossing the bridge at Lyons, a little time before, she had asked me the name of the river which flowed beneath. I had told her it was '*Saône*;' to which she had replied, with a truly philosophical reflection—'Ah, how strange this difference of pronunciation; we call it the *Seine* in Paris.' I had been much amused at the time, but had not thought it worth while to correct the self-confident error, and thus had arisen this extraordinary confusion in the troubled brain of the poor princess. Of course we all laughed heartily at her unexpected sally; but we were grateful nevertheless, for it saved us the reading of the dreaded drama, as no one that evening could be expected to *retrouver son sérieux* sufficiently to listen with becoming attention to all the terrible events which Lemercier had to unfold.

"You see the prince had succeeded in accepting his misfortune *en homme d'esprit*, and the keenest shafts of ridicule must have fallen pointless against one, who joined with such hearty good-will in the mirth which was thus raised, without at all agreeing with those who deemed that it was excited at his own expense."

CHAPTER XIII.

TALLEYRAND'S DESIRE FOR AMITY BETWEEN ENGLAND
AND FRANCE — LOUIS DIXHUIT — THE ARCHBISHOP DE
M. — MADAME DE KRUDENER — ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA.

JUST as my friend had ceased speaking, the door was opened, and the two *vilets-de-chambre* of the prince, armed with shaving-pot and powder-puff, with the same solemn look as at the toilet of Louis Quatorze, described with such humour by Saint Simon, entered, and took their station one on each side the doorway: but when the prince himself entered likewise, in dressing-gown and slippers, leaning on his cane, and bowing low, with a courteous "good morrow," the picture was complete. Le Grand Monarque in his old age, Fagon and Breville, seemed to arise before me. I have heard it said that one great test of the temper of a man is the mood in which he awakes from slumber. This certainly was true as applied to Prince Talleyrand, for perhaps at no other moment in the day was he more lively, more free from care, than at the hour of his toilet. It seemed as if the dreams of the past night had brought with them calm and pleasant recollections, for he was always more disposed to narrate at that moment than during the rest of the four-and-twenty hours. He bade me remain, and I

was in no hurry to depart; for one by one the favoured few dropped in, and the conversation became interesting enough to make me behold, without regret, the hurrying off to the wood of a joyous caravan, which issued from beneath the gateway with echoes of merriment.

C. had busied himself in turning over the journals, translating from the various English papers the leading article of each, and pausing here and there to extract speeches and opinions most worthy of notice. I shall never forget that morning—it was the last opportunity which was afforded me of judging of the never-failing faculty of that *contour intarissable*. The conversation had turned upon England, and it was in reference to some observation made in one of the articles which C. had just been reading, that the prince expressed himself towards this country with an admiration and gratitude which I shall never forget.

“It has ever been my dream,” said he, “to behold a firm and stable alliance between England and France. I cannot live to behold what I have yearned for all my life long; but *you* may yet be witness to the result to which the events of Europe have all tended for the last three centuries. There are many countries, many climes in Europe; there will soon be but two nations—the English and the French. Before many generations have passed away, they will even stand face to face alone upon the globe. They must become, not only allies, but friends. Already you will perceive that their mutual hatred has become tradition. The wars between these two great nations have often partaken of the chivalrous character of the ancient duel, in which the combat was carried on less from antipathy or thirst of vengeance, than from a boyish valour and love of glory. Believe me, where genius and courage are equal, peace becomes indispensable—two countries cannot make war upon each other until both fall dead upon the field of battle; destruction is not triumph. The good which has sprung up, even amidst their mutual jealousies, has been immense: much more has been sown than has yet been gathered, but the seed which has thus been buried

will bring forth fruit, in its own good time, to benefit the whole human race.

“You will find, by the study of history, that they have proceeded in the goodly work together, as though by a tacit agreement, working with the same perseverance, and the same success, to promote the progress of reason and the advancement of prosperity throughout the world. It was at the very same instant that the cry of horror at the tyranny and oppression of the people arose from the heart of each, and hand in hand did their philosophers and men of genius sound the first alarm at the encroachments of despotism. They are destined to regenerate the world.”

I may be forgiven if I listened to this eloquent and soothing speech as to a hallowed prophecy. The theme was one upon which I could have loved to hear him expatiate yet further; but other matters soon pressed upon his attention, and drove the subject from his mind. I observed, however, during my stay at Valençay, that the prince took every opportunity of exalting and approving England, and of putting forth his favourite theory of an *exclusive* alliance between the French and English.

Meanwhile, the toilet was proceeding rapidly under the skilful hands of the two veteran valets; and while I was contemplating with infinite satisfaction a scene to me so novel in its details, the prince, who was in excellent spirits, kept up with even more than his wonted share of vivacity the ball of conversation. Many of the stories which he told that morning were exceeding curious; and worthy of record. I was much struck with some observations which he made with regard to the policy and conduct of Louis the Eighteenth, a sovereign whom he disliked most particularly. To one who carried the principle of forgiveness of injuries to the extent which the Prince de Talleyrand displayed throughout his career, the cold, vindictive nature of Louis must have been singularly obnoxious, while the sense of obligation must have pressed heavily enough upon the small soul of the monarch. Besides which, a rivalry of wit had sprung up between them, which served to in-

crease their mutual dislike and distrust of each other. Louis Dixhuit could not bear the *succès* which some of the bon-mots of the Prince had obtained, and sought to humiliate and embarrass him by direct attacks, as if to put to the proof before the courtiers the well-earned reputation for repartee which the prince had acquired. But the prince always came out of the affray with honour, his self-possession giving him an immense advantage over the irritable temper of the king.

On the day when Madame de Talleyrand (who had been sent to England with a pension) re-appeared in Paris, the king, who seized every opportunity to annoy M. de Talleyrand before the court, exclaimed, on perceiving him, "*Ah, monsieur, que je vous plains!*" Is it true that Madame is arrived in France?" "Alas, it is, sire. I also was doomed to have *mon vingt Mars!*" The king did not reply, but walked before the line of courtiers, biting his lip, as was his wont when vexed. Presently he returned, and again stood before the recreant wit, who alone looked all unmoved and unconscious amidst the general hilarity.

"Prince de Talleyrand," said he, in a severe tone, "is it not time for you to seek the country? Paris is growing hot. I have been told that the shades of Valençay are the coolest and most delightful in all France."

"Sire, they have lost that reputation since Ferdinand VII. cut down my lime trees to make bonfires at the Emperor's fête!"

Once more was the king reduced to silence, and this time more effectually, for he did not return again to the charge; but he said to M. Decazes that evening, "Talleyrand answers as though he were *afraid* of an encounter; in short, he always seems as if he considered himself attacked."

I had often felt a desire to know the real opinion of M. de Talleyrand concerning the character of Louis Dixhuit, and I considered myself particularly fortunate that the conversation should have turned upon the subject. It was evident that he held in small esteem the

principles of the Bourbon, whose crooked policy and cowardly revenge once drew from him an approval of the memorable words of Fox—"Of all revolutions, the worst is a restoration!" The indignation must have been great which could have caused this bitter criticism upon his own work; for he it was who, by the avowal of the king himself, had planned and executed his great principle of legitimacy, and restored the Bourbons to the throne.

"Louis Dixhuit was the veriest liar that ever trode the earth," said the prince. "His love of falsehood was so great, that those admitted to his intimacy had grown to dread the expression from his lips of any kindness, feeling sure that disgrace was nigh. He was the greatest hater I ever met with; cold and calculating in his vengeance, and meanly taunting in its gratification. I cannot describe to you my disappointment when I first beheld him in 1814, after the events which had changed him from a miserable exile into the sovereign of the greatest European country. He received me in the palace at Compiègne. I could judge the character of the man by the manner of his greeting. He was in the great gallery of the château, surrounded by his friends and many of the foreign diplomates, who were all eager and *empressé* in their congratulations—all full of hope and bright anticipations of the future. I may, without being suspected of *fatuité*, declare that a murmur of welcome ran through the assembly when my name was announced, and the king advanced a few steps to meet me with a warm and friendly welcome. He pressed my hand with great kindness, and, drawing forward a chair which stood beside him, exclaimed, 'Prince de Benevent, be seated—and believe me, I do not forget that had it not been for your assistance in the late events, they might have turned in a different chance, and *you* might have said to *me*, "Count de Lille, be seated."'

"The phrase appeared to me so artificial, so stiff and embarrassed, that I involuntarily looked his majesty full in the face for an explanation. By that single glance

I could tell that I was not destined to remain a minister of Louis Dixhuit, and my anticipations proved true, although he knew well that, had it not been for my exertions, he would not have regained his throne until much later—perhaps, indeed, never!

“The dinner which succeeded the grand reception I shall never forget. Every one had expected that the conversation would have been most interesting; that the most important topic of the day would have been duly discussed and commented upon. Each guest had come prepared with his own peculiar suggestion concerning the most effective entry into Paris. Each one had his bon-mot for approval, some appropriate phrase to be printed in the journals. I myself am forced to plead guilty to the like ambition, and obtained the honour of preference over many which, in my opinion, were far better and more piquant than my ‘*Français de plus*,’ although its subsequent popularity justified in some measure its adoption. Whatever might have been our anticipations, it soon became evident that the monarch had learned one great accomplishment during his exile, and he ate in silence of every dish which was presented to him. The court, principally composed of men who had been accustomed to the rapid and noisy dinners of the Emperor, soon began to grow weary of the tedious deglutition of the king, and became, ere long, reduced to be the mere spectators of his enjoyment.

“Not one single word had been spoken during the whole of the first course. It would be impossible to describe the extraordinary effect of that silence, undisturbed save by the timid rattle of the knives and forks, and the hesitating steps of the servants. We gazed at each other with embarrassment. No one dared to speak even to his neighbour save in a whisper; when, just about the middle of the second course, an event occurred which served to arouse us from the stupor into which we had fallen. The king was about to help himself from the dish of spinach which had been handed to him by the servant, when the intention was suddenly arrested by a loud exclamation from the Duke de Duras, who,

rising from his chair, and leaning forward with an earnest and stricken look, exclaimed, 'For the love of Heaven, your Majesty, touch not that spinach!' The king let fall the spoon, which was already half way towards his plate, and raised his eyes in alarm—he was pale as death. There were few, indeed, at the table who did not change countenance at this unexpected exclamation. Suspicions of foul treason—of premeditated crime, immediately filled every eye, and we looked aghast towards the duke for an explanation. Even I myself, although prepared by experience for every exaggeration of court flattery, could not resist the dread of some terrible disclosure.

"*Pourquoi pas?*" faltered out the king, his nasal twang rendered even more tremulous than usual by the terror under which he laboured.

"Oh, sire, I warn you—be advised by me; eat not of that spinach—it is drest with most villanous butter."

"The etiquette of the royal table of course prevented the explosion of the roar of laughter with which the speech would have been greeted had it not been for the mighty presence; and, even as it was, an irrepressible titter ran round the room. The king, however, did not laugh; the subject was of too much importance to be trifled with; he looked first at the Duc de Duras with an expression of doubt, then raised the dish to his nose, pushed it from him with a sigh, and exclaiming, '*C'est pourtant vrai!*' sank back in his chair to brood upon his disappointment.

"After this event, the silence certainly continued still, but not the embarrassment, for, during the rest of the entertainment, we were all convulsed with suppressed laughter, and although of course good breeding and the rules of etiquette prevented its explosion, the conviction that we mutually understood the joke made us feel its relish the more keenly. The dinner concluded while this ludicrous impression lasted, and we retired to the drawing-room, glad to be emancipated from the restraint which sitting thus face to face with royalty always occasions.

“After a moment’s consultation amongst ourselves, we decided that it would be advisable to proceed at once to business, as many of us wished to return to Paris as soon as possible, to forward the measures concerning the public entrance of his majesty into the capital. I was spokesman upon the occasion, and ventured to suggest the propriety of at once opening the discussion, at which we were all come prepared to be amicable wranglers. To our great surprise, his only answer was, ‘*Let us digest first*; we will speak of business another time.’

“I leave you to imagine the effect produced by these words. The action which accompanied them was even more expressive of his earnestness in the pursuit which he recommended, for he sank calmly down among the cushions of the sofa, and in another moment, before our astonishment had subsided, was lost in the sweetest and most quiet slumber I ever witnessed. It was a source of the greatest amusement to us all, as we moved noiselessly about the room, and spoke to each other by signs or in low whispers, in order to avoid interrupting the important slumbers of the sovereign, to behold from the windows of the palace the eager expectation of the crowd assembled in the court below, whose anxious countenances, lighted up by the glare of the illuminations which decorated the frontage of the building, gave token of the intense interest with which they were regarding the moving shadows of those within.

“No doubt they deemed that the proceedings there taking place were big with the fate of the empire—the destiny of thousands of their fellow-countrymen. Each time that any form of more than ordinary dimensions happened to pass before the windows, it was immediately taken for that of the king, and was greeted with loud shouting and applause, which, however, failed to reach the ear of him for whom it was intended, and who still slumbered on, all unconscious, either of the disappointment of those within or the expectation of those without.

"This apparently insipid and eventless dinner was to me one of the most extraordinary and interesting I ever remember, and it has remained a *souvenir*, when others, more remarkable for the wit and spirit of the guests or the generosity of the entertainer, have long ago been forgotten. It placed me at once *au courant* as to the views and habits of our 'restored sovereign.' In no one of the anticipations formed from this interview was I deceived. Selfish, insensible, luxurious, ungrateful, did I ever find him. This dinner at Compiègne was the very picture of his whole reign, and he fully justified the words of my honest friend Dunoyer—'Among the millions of human lives confided to his charge, there is but *one* of value in his eyes; and that one the most valueless of all to the whole world besides.'"

"This repast must have equalled in its interest the famous dinner of the Consulte, eh? you remember, prince?" said the Count de Montrond, who had been listening attentively.

"Indeed, I do remember, and more's the pity," returned the prince, with a gentle laugh, "and I often wish that I could forget the circumstances attendant on that dinner. People talk of the *sublime* and ridiculous; but the *horrible* and ridiculous which were mingled in that scene rendered it altogether one of the most powerful and extraordinary of any I have ever witnessed, either mimicked on the stage or played in real life. I must tell you that I had considered myself extremely fortunate in my transactions with the representatives of the different Italian states, who had assembled at Lyons to negotiate for the protection of their liberties by France. There remained but one clause of our treaty to be disputed—the most knotty point of all, and the one which I felt would exercise my utmost powers of persuasion when it came to be discussed in council. In order to conciliate as much as possible the opposing belligerents, I had been obliged to have recourse to the bait which seldom fails, if well ordered and well executed—that of a *diner diplomatique*, trusting to my worthy ally, Carême,

who, in cookery, had talent enough in his own person to finish what our united talents in diplomacy had so well begun.

"The dinner, then, was decided on; the day had arrived; and I was alone in my study, composing myself for the great struggle which was about to take place, when M. de la Bernardière came hurrying in, pale and breathless. 'Well, we have committed a pretty blunder,' said he; 'only see; with all the "very clever men" by whom we are surrounded, what great fools we must be.' He placed upon my desk an open letter which he had just received. It was from the secretary of the Archbishop of M—— to M. de la Bernardière, who was then supposed to be acting as *my* secretary. A letter, purporting to be written in the strictest confidence, from 'one gentleman to another,' from a secretary to a man of honour, holding the same important office, having the same ministerial functions to fulfil, &c.; containing a sort of mysterious warning; a kind of covert denunciation against the whole proceedings of the Consulte; a threat of failure in all our schemes; an assurance that all the ambitious views of France were perfectly understood; and the letter concluded by declaring that they would be unmasked if the Archbishop of M—— were not invited to the dinner! I must own that this announcement took us rather by surprise; we had reckoned upon the Archbishop of M—— as one of the firmest allies of France, and it was, indeed, by a most inconceivable *bérue* that he had been left out. It must have occurred, no doubt, through some awkward mismanagement on the part of the servants; but, whatever the cause, and it was then too late to enter into any examination, it became evident that the remedy must be applied at once, and that the company of the archbishop must be secured without delay.

"It was M. de la Bernardière, then, who was commissioned to be the bearer of our humble excuses for the neglect of which the servants had been guilty, and our humble request that his Grandeur would overlook the awkwardness of our domestics, and accord us the advan-

tage of his presence at the dinner, which certainly would not be complete without his company. I must confess that I awaited the return of La Bernardière with the greatest anxiety, as I was quite as fully aware of the necessity of securing the good-will of the Archbishop as the officious secretary himself could possibly be. La Bernardière, however, returned triumphant, and the description which he gave us of his visit added to the amusement caused by our groundless fears. He had found the archbishop, attired in flowered dressing-robe and brodered slippers, reclining on an ottoman of curious workmanship, which had been presented to him on that very morning by a deputation of the manufacturers of the good city of Lyons, and the scene altogether had reminded him of an episode of the middle ages. His Grandeur the Lord Archbishop was a singular-looking personage, the melancholy expression of his countenance contrasting with ludicrous effect with the fat, rubicund jollity of his form and features. He was a large, heavy man, with a look of absolute despair, and perpetual groans issued from his brawny chest, like the angry bel-lowings of Mount Vesuvius. At his feet were seated, on a low stool, two young boys, who were chanting from the same book, and whose rare false notes were now and then punished by a smart kick behind, from his Grandeur's peaked slipper.

“He sighed sorrowfully when La Bernardière was announced, and received him with many a lugubrious lamentation on the miserable weather, which, by the bye, was beautiful; then he groaned deeply at the badness of the music of the mass at the cathedral on the day before, which, being of the very best order, and under the superintendence of the *maestro di capello* of the Emperor of Austria, had been by every one else considered excellent; then he moaned at having been induced to leave his own country to come to such a place as Lyons, where it was evident his presence was neither sought nor needed, and finally pronounced a most bitter archiepiscopal curse upon the miserable fare of the hotel where he was staying, regretting, with most sublime

energy, that he should ever have been induced to travel without his own cook, and vowing before the Virgin that he never would do the like again,

“ This was the opportunity for La Bernardière to press his suit and to pray forgiveness for neglect, and to urge his presence at our table, with many an assurance of the utter discomfiture and despair which his refusal would occasion. The countenance of the worthy archbishop lighted up at the mention of the dinner. He was evidently a *bon vivant* of the first class, and it was doubtless to this quality that he owed both the rotundity of his person and the mournful discontent under which he laboured. He apparently deemed, however, that a little hesitation was necessary to preserve his dignity in the eyes of La Bernardière, and he summoned his secretary, to learn from him if it were possible to accept an invitation upon so short a notice—if there were no other engagement to interfere with his desire to prove his respect and consideration for M. de Talleyrand by accepting both the invitation, and the excuses so courteously conveyed. Of course the secretary was too well schooled to decide precipitately; he had to consult his registers, his list of invitations for the week, &c.; however, La Bernardière soon perceived that there was little danger of refusal. The prospect of a real French dinner, Carême and Minguet, was too much for the philosophy of the archbishop; and, as La Bernardière had anticipated, he ended by not only accepting the invitation, but almost excusing himself for having hesitated.

“ It was a real satisfaction to learn the acquiescence of his Grandeur, for we had waited in fear and trembling the return of La Bernardière. It was immediately resolved among the little knot of gentlemen gathered in the salon, that it would be necessary to display even more courtesy towards him at the dinner-table in consequence of this involuntary neglect; and thus, much to my subsequent discomfiture, it was agreed that the poor archbishop was to be placed at my right hand. I was exceedingly diverted at the extreme self-complacency with which he received all our demonstrations of respect, al

our contrivances to do him honour—a mixture of embarrassment and haughtiness which I have never seen equalled. But at sight of the dinner all stiffness and formality were banished. His heavy countenance brightened, and he exhibited the most lively interest in every arrangement, tormenting me terribly to know the name of every dish which was handed to him, then questioning the servant who presented it upon the nature of the ingredients employed in its composition, and finally calling, in a shrill tone, for ‘Nino,’ the short fat man who stood behind his chair, dressed in a livery which, I believe, is called *heraldic*, and which is all striped and cross-barred with every colour in the rainbow—red, yellow, blue, white, as many, in short, as there may be quarterings in the escutcheon, producing an effect more resembling that of the pictures on playing cards than anything else that can be imagined.

“This ‘Nino’ would stoop forward and lean his chin upon the shoulder of his *Grandeur*, and his *Grandeur* would point with a fat, white, stumpy finger to some particular dish upon the table, and, after a few moments whispered conversation between the pair, Nino would disappear for a short time, and then return all in a heat and blaze. He had evidently been despatched to the kitchen for information respecting the origin and composition of the approved *morceau*, in order that it might be reproduced at some future time upon the archiepiscopal table. His delight at every new discovery of this nature was perfectly uncontrollable, and he would chuckle and clap his hands like a child whenever a fresh dish, wearing a tempting exterior, was placed before him.

“To me his *Grandeur* was unfolding a new chapter in the eternal history of human eccentricity, and I watched every motion with the most intense interest. Towards the end of the repast, the ecstasies with which he had greeted the endeavours of our French *artistes*, and, perhaps, also, the enormous efforts which he had used to prove his admiration of their talents, had produced a state of excitement which rather began to alarm me, the more so as even *La Bernardière* had not been

able to win a moment's attention, so absorbed had his Grandeur been with the culinary excellence of our political system. Every dish had been discussed by the archbishop; neither *entremets* nor *hors d'œuvre*, however insignificant, had escaped investigation, until, at last, I grew perfectly amazed at the quantity which had been absorbed, and perceived, with an indescribable feeling of terror and dismay, the hue of dark purple, which, beginning with his ears, had gradually overspread his whole physiognomy, and more particularly the look of stolid dulness with which he now eyed the table.

“‘Your Grandeur is ill,’ said I, in a whisper; ‘allow me to order yon window to be opened above your head, or would you prefer to retire for a moment to breathe the air upon the staircase?’

“‘No, no,’ returned the archbishop, ‘I have not finished dinner yet,’ and immediately helped himself most copiously from a dish of *artichauts à la Barigoul*, (a dish for which, by the bye, my cook was famous,) and fell to eating once again, as if refreshed by the pause he had been compelled to make. I was verily astounded! His Grandeur seemed to have reserved all his energies for the *artichauts à la Barigoul*, and devoured them with as much gusto as though he had eaten nothing since morning.

“It was during the mastication of this most approved morsel that La Bernardière at last succeeded in making the little request in favour of our country which had been hovering on his tongue during the whole of dinner. His Grandeur hesitated not; he was ready to grant everything; he could refuse nothing to any one in this hour of plenitude and satisfaction, and I, in my turn, plied him with propositions and demonstrations, to all of which he assented by a dignified inclination of the head. Emboldened by the view of my unexpected success, La Bernardière took up the burden of my discourse, with an increase of vigour and an increase of presumption, as is invariably the case with solicitors when undisturbed by opposition. Question after question was proposed to the archbishop, who assented to all

our demands in the same quiet manner, until I advanced *le point culminant* of our requests, which really did seem to stagger him, for he raised his head suddenly, and remained an instant gazing on me with a vacant stare, then bent forward, as I thought, to whisper his objections more closely into my ear, and to my terror, as I looked up to listen for his answer, fell forward with his face upon my bosom, without sense and without motion, the dull, gurgling sound in his throat alone giving assurance that life still remained!

"I cannot describe to you the alarm and horror of that moment. I could not shake him off. I had not strength to move the weighty mass. I dreaded, of all things, making a scene, and disturbing the whole company, and called, as loudly as the immense weight pressing upon my throat and bosom would allow me to do, for 'Nino!' But, alas! Nino had been deputed to the kitchen a few minutes before in search of the receipt for the *artichauts à la Barigoul*, and I was, therefore, compelled to support this ponderous mass unheeded, unobserved. In spite of the alarm and the personal inconvenience which I felt, for the big drops of perspiration were rolling down my face, and every muscle was strained to the utmost, yet was there something so ridiculous in the whole scene, that had it not been for that livid countenance so close to my own, those goggling, protruding eyeballs so close to mine, it would almost have created laughter; but it was too horrible! I shall never forget the expression of that face; it will haunt me to my dying day.

"How long I might have remained in this ludicrous position I know not, for every one was busy and boisterous, chatting and laughing with his neighbour; even the traitor La Bernardière had turned away, and was now in full heat of a good story, which he was recounting to his companion on the other side, leaving me, as he imagined, fully occupied with the seduction of the archbishop. At length, my deliverance was accomplished; the ever-watchful Nino, all breathless and panting hot from the kitchen, perceived my danger even

from the door of the banqueting-hall, and, bounding across the floor, seized his master by the collar and pulled him backwards with violence into his chair, where he lay motionless. By a simultaneous movement, as if attracted by some magic spell, the whole company turned at once towards us;—a cry of horror burst from the guests at the contemplation of that ghastly countenance. The confusion of course became general, every seat was abandoned, and the guests crowded round us with recommendations and offers of assistance; but the screaming voice of the piebald ‘Nino’ was heard loud above the hubbub and confusion. ‘Leave him to me; I know him of old. Stand back. Lord, as if this were the first time! You see he only wants to breathe, and he can’t, because his teeth are closed.’ With these words he seized upon the poor archbishop, and after looking round the table in vain for an instrument, he drew from his pocket a huge iron door-key, and attempted, with the effort of a Hercules, to force it between the set, clenched jaws of the archbishop. But, alas! they were already set and clenched in death, and no human power could now avail.

“His Grandeur was dead; the melancholy fact was too visible to all present, excepting, indeed, to the obtuse perceptions of ‘Nino,’ who, in spite of remonstrance and opposition, would insist on repeating his experiment, until at last, with a horrible crash, the strong front teeth of the archbishop gave way: and, roused by the certitude of his misfortune, the unhappy Nino burst into a yell of despair which echoed to the very roof of the apartment. I leave you to judge of the effect of the whole scene, and of the extent of the appetite with which we returned to the table when the ugly sight was removed; and yet, no sooner had the ghastly corpse, borne upon men’s shoulders, and followed by the howling Nino, passed through the yawning door, than the conversation was resumed, perhaps even with more energy than before; the jingling of glasses, the clatter of knives, were renewed with even more noisy glee, and soon, to all appearance, the very memory of the awful

circumstance to which we had all borne witness seemed to have been forgotten, for the laughter and the shouting, the eager gesture and the noisy discussion, were resumed, as if nought had happened to disturb the harmony of the meeting.

“The due meed of lying toasts were likewise bawled forth; vows for the ‘*Fraternity of Europe*,’ and ‘*Universal Union*,’ &c., with some few favourite names, were also shouted with much riot and applause. Disputes of the most animated kind, concerning the rival merits of divers of our public men, were also started and quelled, but never once was the subject with which every heart must have needs been full made the topic of a single observation. I observed that many, while loudest and most clamorous in their discourse, would cast a shuddering glance towards the chair which had so lately been filled with the violet robes and portly dignity of the Lord Archbishop, and which stood now empty and reproachful by my side: then, by a sudden effort, turn away, and grow more clamorous and noisy than before; but, as I have already said, not once was the subject of his miserable death alluded to in any one of the numberless speeches which were subsequently uttered. One would have thought that he had been forgotten on the instant, although his cover still remained upon the board, and his jewelled snuff-box still sparkled beside it. While yet the very presence of the man hovered round us, he was, to outward seeming, as much unthought of as though he had never been.”

This story gave rise to others of the same nature, and many were the anecdotes related of sudden death—the summons which startles men in the midst of revelry and festival, at council-board or in the judgment-seat. Some of these are well known, others would have but small interest for the general reader, but one of the most curious was told by the prince himself with the piquant raciness in which he so much excelled, and which has graven the history in my memory. It happened during a time, too, which possessed a peculiar interest to me—a time which, in spite of its importance, has found but

few chroniclers—the period of the occupation of Paris by the allied armies, and the visit of the sovereigns of Europe, in 1815. Men's minds were so agitated by the crowding of events the one upon the other, by dread anticipations of what would come next, that public feeling was taken by surprise, and scarcely had time to set up its own standard, or leisure to record its own impressions; this I take to be the reason why so few of the memoirs of our day contain any special description of the state of society at that time.

“I had been dining with a circle of wary, ever-watchful diplomates of the lesser kind, Russians, Austrians, and Prussians,” began the prince; “every word had been weighed in the balance of prudence and *prévoyance* before I had ventured to give it utterance. Not a syllable of the conversation of others had been permitted to fall unheeded on my ear, and the extreme tension of intellect which it had required, both in weighing my own words and in watching those of others, had, at last, so wearied my mind, that I experienced a feeling of vacancy, an exhaustion of moral power, which might be compared to nothing but inebriation. When the repast was over, I strolled forth on foot to seek my old friend and comforter, Bergasse. I knew by experience that an hour spent with him would restore my spirit to its equilibrium, and soothe, by the counter-irritation of his fund of whimsical argument, the agitation of my nervous system. He was not at home, however, and I was turning away, disappointed, from his lodgings, when his valet, an old confidential servant, followed me with the information, that, if I needed Monsieur very much, he had left word where he was to be found; he had gone to the *soirée* at Madame de Krudener's; it was to be a grand gala night at her house, and the Emperor Alexander was to be among the guests!

“This information, of course, roused me at once from the fatigue and lethargy of my diplomatic dinner, and I determined to do that night what I had never done before, in spite of the frequent solicitations of the fair *philosophe* herself, go to ‘the *soirée* at Madame de

Krudener's;’ nay, there was something in the very project which seemed to revive my flagging spirits, and I set forth on my expedition, determined to be amused; this object being already more than half attained by the very determination alone.

“When I arrived in the Rue de Cléry, where Madame de Krudener then resided, I found the street impassable—a crowd of carriages of every description filling it from one end to the other. I immediately perceived among the number admitted into the court-yard the plain green carriage and unpretending liveries of the Emperor Alexander. It is an extraordinary thing how time and place will suddenly tend to the development of certain sentiments, which, even if they have existed before, have, perhaps, been rather repulsed than encouraged. Thus it was with me on the night in question. No sooner had I beheld the pressure of the crowd, the difficulty of obtaining admittance into the sanctum of Madame de Krudener, than I was seized with an indescribable longing to press forward, and a regret that I had never been to her receptions before. It was some time before I could force my way through the dense mass of visitors which obstructed the staircase. However, in all matters, great or small, everything happens to those who know how to wait with patience, and my turn did come in due course, and I also found myself ushered into the mighty presence. How different did I find this *huitaine* from those I had witnessed at her former residence!

“The whole scene of former days flashed upon me, as I made my way through the rooms towards the sanatorium wherein the divinity of the place sat enshrined in mysterious and hallowed seclusion. When I had last beheld her, before her departure for Riga, she was in the bloom of youth and beauty; her complexion, of exquisite fairness, bespoke her northern origin, while the delicate and graceful form bore all the softness of the south. The long ringlets of golden hair which shaded her face in such rich luxuriance had been the theme of many an ode and sonnet, while her grace in the dance

had made many an unhappy 'Gustave' among the sad *incroyables* of the day.

"I now found her, after a lapse of years, the same in all things, and yet, how strangely altered! Her youth was gone; and her beauty, of which she still possessed some little share, no longer satisfied that ardent thirst of admiration, that morbid, eager craving for popularity, which had possessed her soul from her childhood upwards. She had been greeted with divine honours, and divinity she would insist upon remaining, in spite of the change which had taken place both in herself and in her worshippers. She had exchanged her pedestal of alabaster, wreathed with roses, for one of mere painted pasteboard, and only maintained her *aplomb* upon its narrow surface by the strangest efforts and contortions. It was a curious scene; such a one as I should have thought it impossible to see enacted in the nineteenth century.

"The rooms were crowded; and, with an admirable comprehension of theatrical display, the fair hostess remained in the furthestmost of all from the entrance. A space of the width of the doorways through which you had to pass was kept vacant for the approach of strangers. It was thus that, through a long lane of curious gazers, I was even forced to wend my way towards the place where Madame de Krudener sat, in her hallowed and almost solitary glory. In the midst of all that was singular in this extraordinary reception, what struck me most was the unearthly silence which reigned in the assembly. Not a word was uttered above a whisper, and the few greetings of friendly recognition with which I was hailed as I passed through the *seven* chambers, all crowded to excess, were scarcely audible from the low tone in which they were uttered. The room which Madame had honoured with her preference was a very small boudoir at the extreme end of the apartment. I observed in a moment that those which I had traversed were dimly and poorly lighted, although there was animation enough imparted to the assembly by the gay *parure* of the ladies, and the glittering uniforms of all

nations, which were gathered there; but the effect was so artistically managed, that, as you looked forward down a narrow, shaded vista, the single point brilliantly lighted—the white dress of the lady, became the immediate centre of attraction.

“Madame received me most graciously, and I will confess that it was not without some emotion that I bent low to kiss her hand. She courteously reminded me of former times, and, in the sweetest tones which ever fell upon the human ear, reproached me gently for my tardy compliance with her oft-repeated invitation. There certainly was something irresistible in her voice and manner; for I, who had come prepared to resist, yielded to the charm without a struggle, and gazed at her with an interest which I had little expected to feel. She was at that time fast verging towards the dreaded forty, and it was even said that it was merely owing to the disagreement in the two calendars that she had not already passed that fatal boundary, and she defended herself, with most amusing earnestness, against the charge brought forward by the evil-disposed persons who accused her of being both ‘visionary and quadragenary.’ However, Time had dealt kindly with her, having left traces of his passage more upon her figure than her face. Both had increased and spread: the bloom and freshness had departed, but wrinkles and suffusion had not yet arrived.

“She was attired in a robe of her own invention, made of some kind of woollen stuff of the purest white, long, full, and flowing, with sleeves which reached to the very ground; the whole was edged with silver, and the robe was confined at the waist by a silver girdle. Her hair, which was still beautiful as ever, although not quite of so bright a golden hue as I remembered it, hung loose down her back and over her bosom, reaching to the waist in the most beautiful ringlets, which, whether the effect of nature or of art, were well calculated to enhance the expression of her inspired attitudes. There was exquisite coquetry in the manner in which, by a gentle movement, she shook the ringlets from her brow, in

order to clear her vision, when any new visitor drew near, and in the peculiarly graceful motion with which she would draw her hand now and then across her eyes, as if to shade the light for an instant, during which the snowy fingers, laden with gems, glistened through the drooping curls with an effect perfectly bewildering.

“She was reclining upon a low divan which ran along the wall, supported by cushions of crimson velvet, which set off her fair complexion and the dazzling whiteness of her dress to the greatest advantage. On one side stood the Emperor Alexander, attired in a suit of black, with no mark of his high rank save the glittering star of brilliants on his bosom. If he had come prepared to heighten the effect of Madame de Krudener’s *tableau*, he could not have adopted a costume and bearing more in harmony with her intentions. On the other side, leaning backward in his chair, with the most perfect nonchalance imaginable, sat the King of Prussia *en personne*. Before I had recovered from the surprise which the latter discovery had occasioned, my hand was seized in a friendly grasp by my old friend and ally, Bergasse, who, together with a sombre, wild-looking individual, was seated on a low stool at the feet of the prophetess, both having, apparently, been occupied in transcribing the words which fell from her lips, for each was armed with a *calpin* and pencil-case.

“When I had paid my respects to the lady, I was about to retire, as I supposed was the etiquette for casual visitors, but I was destined to feel the advantage of possessing a ‘friend at court,’ for Bergasse drew me gently back, and led me to a seat in the corner of the room, where I remained an observer, unobserved, of all that was going on around me. Bergasse endeavoured for a moment to satisfy my curiosity by a few brief answers to my whispered questions, but he had no time to waste upon a poor, uninitiated novice like myself, and he soon left me, and resumed his seat by the side of his necromantic-looking companion. However, from the few short words he had found time to utter, he informed me that I was in great good luck that evening,

for Madame de Krudener was in one of her most ecstatic moods, and had already three times experienced the state of *extase*, and, while under this influence, had given utterance to some of the most powerful and most beautiful prophecies and denunciations, which himself and his friend had most righteously transcribed, word for word, and in the order of their utterance.

“ ‘Who is your companion?’ said I, pointing to the long, thin figure in black which remained gathered up at the feet of the lady.

“ ‘That is our new *illuminé*,’ returned Bergasse, triumphantly. ‘It is Jüing Stilling, who has left home, family, and friends, to follow our inspired mistress. I have attached myself to Madame de Krudener from admiration and conviction; he has done so from the sympathy of mystic science, the strongest of all ties. How I regret, my friend, that I began not life as I now am ending it, in communion with the lofty-minded, the inspired. How I grieve now over the time lost, the unambitious aims of my youth! Why come you not with us? In our existence is true happiness only to be found.’

“ What further he would have added I know not, for, just then, the dull, sepulchral voice of Jüing Stilling called him by his name, and he slunk back to his side, leaving me to contemplate the scene before me.

“ There was a moment of deadly silence after Bergasse had regained his seat. Madame de Krudener sat motionless, staring with fixed, unmeaning gaze, upon the vacant space before her. The Emperor Alexander stood in passive expectation, not a muscle of his features disturbed, while the King of Prussia, who at that time never left his side, and never turned his gaze from the autocratical countenance, looked at it now with more intent and searching earnestness. Presently the seeress started from her dream, and slowly arose from the divan where she had been reclining. She waved her arm aloft, while yet her fixed gaze wavered not, and moved a step or two forward. Nothing could exceed the grandeur of her appearance at that moment. The long robe in which she was enveloped drooped in graceful folds about her

person, and the loose sleeve fell back from the extended arm, and displayed its rounded form and snowy whiteness with most bewitching effect. She spoke—her voice was deep and solemn, and its accents fell with slow and measured cadence on the ear.

“ ‘Let us pray,’ said she ; then paused ; while I could hear from the rooms beyond, and which I had traversed on my entrance, that peculiar agitation and bustle which precedes the change of position in churches. ‘Let us pray ; all, sinners that ye are, sink upon your knees, and beg forgiveness from the God of heaven !’ exclaimed she, in a louder tone ; and in a moment, while yet she stood with arms uplifted, and with her head thrown back, every person present, from Alexander, the autocrat of all the Russias, to the very waiters who had been handing the refreshments to the company, sank down upon their knees, and bowed their foreheads to the very ground ! She herself knelt not, but remained standing, while she poured forth a prayer, spoken in earnest and burning language ; words of which I have not been able to recal a syllable to memory, so absorbed was I in contemplation of all that was passing. I verily believe that of all that multitude—for I think there must have been at least five hundred persons present—there was not a soul save myself who had dared to remain seated ; and with me it was neither mockery nor bravado which had caused me to disobey the injunction, but at the moment I was so taken by surprise, so absorbed with the novelty of the scene, that I was scarcely conscious of the impropriety of which I was guilty. To speak truth, I was busy comparing the circumstances now passing before me with those under which I had last beheld Madame de Krudener ; Garat, the opera singer, and Bernardin de St. Pierre were then her supporters. Sounds of mirth and festivity, the light *fiorituri* of Garat, the mildly-caustic declamation of Bernardin, had given place to the solemn tones of the prophetess, the language of love and gallantry to the language of prayer.

“ She continued, for the space of at least an hour, in a state of inspiration, never ceasing, during all that time,

to hold on her discourse with the same unhesitating eloquence. She spoke of Alexander, 'the white angel of the north,' predicting for him and his descendants, glory, happiness, and honour, unlimited sway from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same. Then did she revert to the black angel of the south, foretelling that he 'would escape from his second cage like a chained lion.'

"The prophecies were uttered with a self-confidence, an implicit belief, which I could not but admire—it was so well calculated to inspire the same feeling in others. The only drawback was the reflection that none of them had as yet come true.

"This state of *extase* lasted for some time after the prayer was ended, during which the whole assembly remained kneeling. I bent forward and looked through the open door; not a single gesture of impatience, not a single wandering glance, could I detect among the crowd. Every head was bent low. Some even kissed the very floor; and it really was a curious sight to behold those dainty ladies, those gaily-dressed courtiers, whose costume of white kerseymere knee-breeches and silk stockings was anything but favourable to the kneeling posture, remain thus, without a murmur, so long as it pleased the fair preacher to hold them in expectation that she would resume her discourse.

"The prayer was ended at length, and every one arose, gently, without confusion and without noise, and sank again into their seats in silent meditation, which continued undisturbed by a single sound for several minutes. The prophetess had fallen back upon her ottoman, and her golden locks completely buried her face beneath their shadow. I would have given much to have been sure of the expression of her countenance, for once I became aware that her eye sought mine, and then I observed that she turned aside to avoid my scrutiny. Bergasse sprang to my side in delight and triumph. 'Is she not splendid?' inquired he, with a naïveté of tone and manner at which I was highly amused. 'You have heard her in her glory to-night,' he whispered in my ear,

with an air of the greatest mystery, while his countenance changed from the expression of childish admiration, which it had worn when he had addressed me, to that of awe and wonder—‘She has had a *pressentiment*, and is under its influence still.’ He took my arm, and walked with me through the crowd into the adjoining room.

‘As I left the sacred boudoir, I beheld the ‘white angel of the north’ in busy conversation with the prophetess, and the unhappy King of Prussia bending forward, eager to catch the slightest syllable which fell from the lips of the speakers; but the effort was vain; his neck was too short, and his eye wandered from the one to the other with the restless, unquiet look of a person afflicted with deafness.

‘Bergasse turned to me as soon as we were alone. ‘There is something dreadful about to happen,’ said he, in a solemn whisper. ‘She has had her *pressentiment* to-night, and she has never deceived us yet. Something awful is about to occur here; in this very apartment, perhaps in this very room, upon the very spot where we now are standing!’ He seized my arm, and drew me nearer to his side, then added—‘My dearest friend, some one is about to DIE beneath this very roof!’ I drew back aghast; but Bergasse seemed too much *exalté* by his subject to care if even he himself were the victim, provided the prophecy of his divinity came true. ‘Yes,’ added he, with a grim smile, ‘*she* has felt that death is walking amongst us; he is now, at this moment, choosing his victim. She has insisted on my sending home my nephew. She wished me to depart also, but I must not leave her. Even while I am dallying with you, I am losing the precious words which fall with such sweet unction from her tongue.’

‘He left me abruptly, and hurried back to the boudoir of Madame de Krudener, while I remained lost in astonishment, to think that the man, who had once dealt terror into the heart of the boldest satirist that ever existed—he who had for awhile, by his energy and sarcastic bitterness alone, arrested the headlong progress of Beaumarchais, and turned the popular tide of ridicule

against him who had so long ridiculed all things with impunity, should have thus become, in his old age, the pining slave of a self-deluded impostor, who was prompted in the comedy she was 'playing' by the wild vagaries of the ex-tailor, Jüing Stilling. I left the *soirée* with feelings of mingled pity and disgust, to which was added, a strange suspicion concerning the motive which actuated the 'white angel of the north' in thus making this public display of his admiration of the prophetess, and consenting to be made one of the *coryphées* in the theatrical representations she was thus in the habit of giving.

"I was scarcely awake the next morning, when Bergasse rushed into my room, exclaiming, in a tone of triumph, 'She did not deceive—it was true—the *presentiment* was justified! Why did you not stay till later?—you would have *seen* the truth with your own eyes, and have been an unbeliever no longer.' With the artful tact of a professed marvel-monger, he allowed me time for reflection after he had pronounced these words, and then resumed, as soon as he perceived that I had collected my wandering senses.

"'You were no sooner gone, my friend, than her inspired prophecy of last evening was fulfilled. I was seated where you had left me, at her feet, when a young man of the Neapolitan embassy, who had been hovering around the door, gathered sufficient courage to enter the boudoir and make his bow to Madame de Krudener. His name was Carascola; he had arrived but a few days since from Naples. Madame de Krudener had known his mother, and, in courtesy and kindness, felt in duty bound to ask him some few questions concerning the prospects and intentions which had led him to Paris. He had answered her questions with that embarrassed timidity with which young men are used to reply to their superiors, and Madame de Krudener had already dismissed him, and turned again to the "white angel of the north," whose conversation had been interrupted by the young man's entrance, when suddenly she started from the sofa, as though a pistol-shot had been fired through her brain, and, darting on me a look

of terror, she exclaimed, faintly, "Bergasse, the hour is come—nought can save us from the approach of our Sovereign Lord and Master. He is here—his choice is made." At that very instant, I give you my honour as a gentleman, I beheld Carascola, who was leaving us, full of youthful spirit, to gain the outer room, fall forward upon the floor, without stumbling, without resistance, without convulsion, but rather, as it were, sink down softly as though seeking repose, and there lie stretched his full length, without sense and without motion. A crowd soon gathered round him, and they raised him up; his countenance was pale and his features frightfully swollen, even in that minute; a doctor who was present opened a vein upon the forehead, but it was all of no avail. She had spoken truth. Death had chosen his victim, and that victim was Carascola.'

"Such was the tale which Bergasse had come so early to my bedside to tell me. I ascertained, that very day, that it was true in every particular, and was certainly an extraordinary proof of the possibility of an almost supernatural coincidence. I doubt not that Madame de Krudener had often experienced these *pressentimens* before, but I much doubt whether any one of them ever came true so rapidly, so *apropos*, as in this case. The young man had evidently been in a bad state of health, perhaps subject to fits, from his childhood, and on this occasion the excitement of meeting with the august personage he had come to visit, the heat of the room, the emotion of the prayer and prophecies, must have caused a congestion of the brain. I can, however, vouch for the entire truth of the fact I have related; you must yourselves arrange the causes, according to your own scepticism or powers of belief."

The prince arose as he concluded his story; his toilet was completed, and he was released from his tormentors. I was sorry to behold the morning conference thus breaking up, for I could have listened on until sunset. I dared, however, to hazard one single question: "Did you ever see Madame de Krudener after this?"

The prince bit his lip slyly. "Never so close as on

that night," returned he; "but from a distance, as such great luminaries should only be gazed at by vulgar mortals like ourselves. It was at the review of Alexander's troops, in the *plaine des Vertus*, a ceremony of which she has left us such a flaming description. But, alas! already was she no longer the object of exclusive adoration to the 'white angel of the north,' for I observed that his head was often close under the pink bonnet of Madame du C——, while the yellow ringlets and broad straw hat of Madame de Krudener were left to float unheeded in the wind. The purpose for which he had been playing the comedy of such assiduous attendance at her prayer-meetings was evidently answered, and he cared no longer to expose himself to ridicule for her sake. Soon after this she left Paris for ever, and I beheld her no more. But my niece, who, like many of her sex, was infatuated with the eloquence and talents of Madame de Krudener, followed her to the Greuzacher Horn, whither she had retired. Here she sank lower in the scale, and no longer preached to kings and emperors, but to an immense army of ragged proselytes, whom her generosity in almsgiving, more than her pious exhortations, had drawn around her. This same army followed her, I believe, in all her wanderings; and I am told that at her death the little colony established itself at Karasoubazar, where it is flourishing still, and where almost divine honours are paid to her remains; pilgrimages are performed to her tomb to this very day, and miracles are wrought as freely as at many other shrines.

"It is certain that the game which Alexander deemed it worth his while to play was a deep one, for its object has not been discovered to this very day. I know, from the best authority, that for a long time he counterfeited entire obedience to her commands—fasted, prayed, and wept, beat his bosom and tore his hair, when she so ordered it—took the whole responsibility of the absurd and childish project of the Holy Alliance upon his own shoulders—and, in short, gave himself up to the guidance of one whom he feigned to consider as Heaven-

inspired. And when the allied sovereigns—who had all, at first, been blinded by the tinsel of the framework of that famous treaty—turned round and laughed it to scorn, shamed by the blunt good sense of England, who had pronounced the document *unintelligible*, and refused to sign, Alexander—whether from misplaced *amour propre*, or from real conviction, still remains a mystery—would never consent to withdraw his signature. Whatever may be the merits of the conception of that mighty work, it certainly sprang from the brain of Madame de Krudener alone; but when complimented upon the stupendous, though ‘unintelligible,’ design, it was her wont to reply with great modesty, while she flung back her ringlets and looked towards Heaven, ‘The Holy Alliance is the immediate work of God. It is He who has chosen me for his weak, uncertain instrument, and it is He who has inspired me with the idea of uniting the sovereigns of Europe in the holy bonds of brotherly love, for the good of the great human family under their charge.’”

The prince had moved towards the door even before his words were quite concluded, and, to my regret, he turned and bowed to us on the threshold, and then passed out. It was the hour for business, and he retired to his own study until the carriage was announced for his morning drive.

* * *

That very evening, the courier from Paris brought me the summons to repair to my station, which I dared not disobey; that official summons, sealed with the official seal, and stamped with the official *griffe*, which strikes such terror into the hearts of youthful aspirants to diplomatic fame. I have grown older and wiser since that time, and have in my turn despatched many an official summons to strike terror into the heart of some diplomatic tyro. I have lived to satisfy even my mother's ambitious hopes, and have had my full share, both of diplomatic toils and their glittering reward; but I can never look back without an overwhelming gratitude and regret towards the time when, unknown and obscure, I

passed those pleasant hours in the society of the great and illustrious Prince de Talleyrand, during that short vacation at Valençay.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

IT was scarcely six o'clock, on the morning of the 17th of May (1838), when I bent my steps towards the old hotel in the Rue St. Florentin, with a mind full of sad misgivings; for when, at a late hour on the evening previous, I had quitted it, I had been but slightly encouraged to hope that another day could possibly be granted to its proud and gifted owner. The dull grey dawn was just struggling to rise above the tall chestnuts of the Tuileries. All was still silent; and as I pulled the heavy bell, its echo reverberated through the vast court-yard with a sound almost unearthly. I did not pause at the porter's lodge to inquire news of the night, for the first object which met my eye was the physician's carriage, and I rushed at once to the foot of the grand staircase, which I had so often ascended with feelings so far different from those I now experienced. The two stone figures of Silence, which stood on each side of the gigantic portal, humid and dripping with the morning fog, struck a chill to my very soul. Those huge lions, which had so often been compared to the insatiate lions of Venice, now reminded me of those mute and motionless watchers carved by the marble gates of an ancient sepulchre. It seemed as if every object were already enveloped in that atmosphere of death, and that the old mansion, at all times sad and dreary, was already pervaded with the odour of the tomb.

What gave a colouring to this idea was the total silence which reigned around, where in general, even at this early hour, all was hurry and business. The antechamber was deserted, for the anxious domestics had crowded one and all to the apartment nearest to that occupied by their beloved master, in order to obtain the earliest information respecting the progress of his malady. There perhaps never existed a person who, with so little apparent effort, possessed in so great a degree the power of conciliating the affections of his dependents as the Prince de Talleyrand. Of those who were with him at that moment, all had, with few exceptions, grown grey in his service; while of those who had started in their career with him in his youth, none remained: he had lived to see them all go down before him into the grave. The prince had always been accustomed to treat his chief domestics as persons worthy of confidence, and many a subject of the highest importance, which had been nursed with the greatest secrecy through the bureaux of the Foreign-office, has been discussed at full length, and with all liberty of speech, before his valet-de-chambre. It was, indeed, his custom for many years before his death to select the hour allotted to his toilet for the transaction of the most important affairs, and the discussion of the most weighty politics, and never, upon any occasion, was he known to dismiss his valet from the chamber. Perhaps some apology may be found for this apparent carelessness in the fact of his trust having never been betrayed.

The most remarkable of the whole tribe was decidedly the venerable Courtiade, one to whom, by reason of his long services and devoted attachment, the prince allowed a greater latitude than to any other, and whose homely remarks, and shrewd observations upon passing events, afforded him the greatest amusement. This man had entered the prince's service long before the breaking out of the first revolution, and died, "still in those voluntary bonds," during the embassy to London. It was said that the grief which he experienced in consequence of being left in Paris, owing to his advanced age and grow-

ing infirmities, contributed, in a great measure to hasten his death. His attachment was rather that of a member of the canine species than of a human being. During the early years of his service, he had partaken of all the vicissitudes of the ever-changing fortunes of his master. The prince would take a peculiar delight in recounting to strangers the story of his flight to America, when, in obedience to a secret friendly warning, he resolved to take his immediate departure. Courtiade was with him at the moment that he received the letter which was the cause of this decision, and the prince immediately confided to him the step he was about to take, at the same time advising him, as he had a wife and family to whom he would doubtless wish to bid adieu before venturing on so long and perilous a journey, more especially since the period of his return must be distant and uncertain, that he should let him depart at once, and follow in the next packet which should sail. "Non, non," replied Courtiade, in the greatest agitation; "you shall not leave the country alone and unattended—I will go with you; but only leave me till to-morrow night!" "That cannot be, Courtiade," returned the prince; "the delay will endanger our position, without being sufficiently long to be of service to yourself and your wife." "Bah! c'est bien de ma femme dont il s'agit!" exclaimed the valet, with the tears rushing to his eyes; "it is that accursed washerwoman, who has got all your fine shirts and your muslin cravats, and how, in heaven's name, will you be able to make an appearance, and in a foreign country too, without them?"

I shall never forget the singular impression which Courtiade produced upon me. I was admitted, as was usual with all persons who came upon affairs demanding attention and privacy, at the hour of the prince's toilet. It was a little while after the revolution of July, and just before his embassy to London. I found the renowned diplomatist seated tranquilly at his bureau, which mostly served him both for writing and dressing table. It was, I believe, upon the very day that the prince was to take his farewell audience of Louis

Philippe, ere he set out for England, and he was to appear upon this occasion in the usual court costume. One valet was busily occupied, with a most serious countenance, in powdering, with might and main, the thick masses of his long grey hair. Another was kneeling low at his feet, endeavouring, although with difficulty, from his constrained position beneath the table, to buckle the latches of his shoes. His secretary was seated at the bureau beside him, occupied in opening, one after the other, a huge collection of letters with astonishing rapidity, scanning the contents of each, quietly throwing some into the waste-paper basket, and placing the rest in a pile beneath for the inspection of the prince. I could not but admire the *sang froid* with which, while listening to my errand, to him personally of the highest importance, he suffered himself to be invested with the embroidered paraphernalia of his official uniform. When the attire was completed, the door of the chamber opened, and in stalked, with tottering steps, the aged, weather-beaten Courtiade, laden with divers small boxes, of various forms and sizes. These were filled with the ribands and insignia of the multifarious orders with which the prince was decorated. It was curious to witness the total indifference with which he suffered himself to be ornamented, as contrasted with the eager solemnity of Courtiade, to whom the desire to fill this office with becoming dignity (for it was the only duty which in his latest years devolved upon him) had become the chief aim and object of existence.

I have been led into this involuntary digression by the remembrance of my own sensations as I traversed the now silent and deserted apartment, and was carried back in memory to that interview, inwardly comparing the anticipations of such a moment with those by which my soul was on this occasion so depressed and saddened.

When I entered the chamber where reposed the veteran statesman, he had fallen into a profound slumber, from which some amendment was augured by the physicians, although it might partly be ascribed to the fatigue induced by the over-excitement he had under-

gone a few hours previously, in the performance of the last act of the chequered drama of his existence—his retraction; an act which, after having been visited with praise and blame, with scorn or admiration, and each in an exaggerated degree, must for ever remain a mystery. It must have cost him much—those alone who were about him at the moment can tell how much—for he well knew that the eyes of all parties would be turned upon him, and that his motives would be discussed under various considerations, according as the opinions or the interests of each were concerned: for there were many from whom praise was to him more bitter than blame, or even ridicule, from others; and he knew well that none would view this step in its proper light, as a sacrifice small in itself—important only because it was the last, the sacrifice of every feeling, of every consideration, to the power to which he had taught every sentiment to bend for so many years, until it was said that all had been crushed by the mighty giant,—that love, revenge, even ambition, that all-absorbing passion of the master mind, had been led captive or perished in the struggle with his reason!

A report has gone abroad of his having been tormented and persecuted, even on his death-bed, to execute this deed. This is, however, far from the truth; it had for some time occupied his thoughts, and among his papers have been found many proofs, amongst others, fragments of a correspondence with the Pope upon the subject, which must necessarily tend to confirm the assertion. But the fact is, he was influenced in this measure, as in many other instances wherein he has drawn down the blame of the sticklers for consistency, by the desire to spare pain and trouble to his family: he knew that his relatives would suffer much inconvenience by his resistance on his death-bed to the execution of certain religious formalities, to which, in his own mind, he attached not the slightest importance; and whatever may be stated by his enemies with regard to the cold and calculating policy which had guided all his actions, it cannot be denied that he had ever held in view the

elevation and aggrandizement of his family. In this aim he had never been deterred, neither by dulness, nor incapacity, nor even by ingratitude; and, as we have seen, he moreover made it his care beyond the grave: his powerful and passionless soul rejected all the petty sentiments which actuate men of ordinary character: he was governed by his reason alone, and listened to nought beside.

The slumber, or rather lethargy, into which the prince had fallen, had continued for about an hour after my arrival, and it was curious to observe, as time drew on, the uneasiness which was manifested, even, alas! by those nearest and dearest, lest this repose, however salutary, should endure beyond the hour fixed by the king for his visit. It was with some difficulty that he was aroused from this oblivion, and made to comprehend the importance of the event which was about to occur. He was scarcely lifted from his reclining position and seated on the edge of the bed, when, punctual as the hand upon the dial, his majesty, followed by Madame Adelaide, entered the apartment. It was a study both for the moralist and painter to observe the contrast between these two individuals, as, seated thus side by side, beneath the canopy of those old green curtains, they seemed grouped as for the composition of some historical picture. It was startling to turn from the broad, expansive forehead, the calm and stoic brow, and the long and shaggy locks which overshadowed it, giving to the dying statesman that lion-like expression of countenance, which had so often formed the theme of admiration to poets and to artists, and then to gaze upon the pointed crown, well-arranged *toupée*, the whole outward bearing, *tant soit peu bourgeois*, of the king, who, even at this early hour of the morning, was attired, according to his custom, with the utmost precision and princeness. Despite the old faded dressing-gown of the one, and the snuff-coloured coat, stiff neckcloth, and polished boots of the other, the veriest barbarian could have told at a glance which was the "last of the nobles," and which the "First Citizen" of the empire. His majesty was the first to break silence,

as in etiquette bound to do. It would be difficult to define the expression which passed across his features as he contemplated what might be called the setting of his guiding-star. Perhaps he could not himself have rendered an account of the exact impression which the scene produced upon his mind.

"I am sorry, prince, to see you suffering so much," said he, in a low, tremulous voice, rendered almost inaudible by extreme emotion.

"Sire, you have come to witness the sufferings of a dying man, and those who love him can have but one wish, that of seeing them shortly at an end."

This was uttered in that deep, strong voice so peculiar to himself, and which age had not had the power to weaken, nor the approach of death itself been able to subdue. The effect of the speech, short as it was, was indescribable,—the pause by which it was preceded, and the tone of reproach, calm and bitter, in which it was conveyed, produced an impression which will not be soon forgotten by those who were present.

The royal visit, like all royal visits of an unpleasant nature, was of the shortest duration possible. It was evident that his majesty felt it to be an irksome moment, and that he was at a loss what countenance to assume; and, after uttering some expressions of consolation, he rose to take his leave, but too visibly pleased that the self-imposed task was at an end. Here the prince once more, with his usual tact, came to his relief, by slightly rising and introducing to his notice those by whom he was surrounded,—his physician, his secretary, his principal valet, and his own private doctor; and then a reminiscence of the old courtier seemed to come across him, for with his parting salutation he could not forbear a compliment,—“Sire, our house has received this day an honour worthy to be inscribed in our annals, and one which my successors will remember with pride and gratitude.”

I must confess that I was grievously disappointed in the anticipations which I had formed of this visit. I had looked upon it as the farewell of the safely-landed

voyager (landed, too, amid storm and tempest) to the wise and careful pilot who had steered him skilfully through rock and breaker, and now pushed off, alone, amid the darkness, to be seen no more. But no: there was the hurry and impatience of one to whom the scene was painful; and that it was painful who can doubt? There was, too, that evident secret self-applause in the performance of an irksome duty; but not the slightest expression of any one sentiment of friendship or attachment, such as I had imagined to have bound these two men together. A friend of mine—a man of great sense and discernment—to whom I made this observation, remarked, drily, “It is plain that his majesty has no fear to see him die; but wait a little while, and we shall see that he will have regret enough that he should be dead!”

As a kind of relief to the gloomy side of the picture, might be observed the anxious feminine flurry displayed throughout the interview by Madame Adelaide, who appeared to suffer much uneasiness lest the coldness of her royal brother should be noticed, and who endeavoured, by a kindly display of interest and busy politeness, to make amends for what might appear wanting elsewhere.

I should not, perhaps, have deemed it necessary to record thus minutely the particular details of this scene, had not it already been so much dwelt upon in another light. Astonishment and admiration, frivolous and exaggerated, have been expressed with regard to this remarkable act of condescension on the part of Louis Philippe, as though royalty were alone exempt from the debt of manly and honourable gratitude. Why, there is not one of the sovereigns beneath whom Talleyrand had lived, who would not have hurried to show respect to the death-bed of this truly great statesman; and yet all had not been raised to the throne by his means! Napoleon, the stern—the iron-hearted—even he would not have hesitated, because he scorned not to avow that he had owed as much of his political success to the timely counsels of his minister for foreign affairs as to his own skill and foresight. Louis Dixhuit—neither would he

have deemed such a step beneath his dignity : he, too, needed no reminding that he was deeply indebted to the Prince de Talleyrand, not perhaps for zeal and activity, but for what, according to time and circumstance, was to him of far more value—his wise, discreet, and generous forbearance : while Charles X. would have come, with pious resignation, to mourn the quenching of this last beacon of the old French aristocracy, and would have rejoiced that by his means it should have been extinguished amid becoming dignity and honour.

It was shortly after the departure of the king that the first symptoms of dissolution were observed by the physicians. The whole family, every member of which had been apprised of this, immediately gathered around the prince. The Duke de P—— was there among the number, and I could not forbear a smile as I remembered the satirical observation made by the prince himself, a short time before his illness, upon the occasion of rather a ceremonious visit from this personage,—“ He leaves me in disappointment,” said he, as he departed ; “ one would think, by his melancholy visage and his lugubrious costume, that he was deputed hither by some *entrepreneur des pompes funèbres*.”

Towards the middle of the day, the prince began to grow more restless and feverish. I could not resist the temptation of seeking relief from the stifled air of that close chamber, and passed through to the drawing-room. I was verily astounded at the scene which there met my eyes. Never shall I forget the impression produced by the transition from that silent room—that bed of suffering—to the crowded apartment where “ troops of friends ”—all the *élite* of the society of Paris—were assembled. There was a knot of busy politicians, with ribbons at their button-holes—some with powdered heads, some with bald heads, gathered around the blazing fire ; their animated conversation, although, by the good taste and feeling of him who directed it, conducted in a low tone, filling the apartment with its unceasing murmur. I observed, too, some of the diplomatist’s oldest friends, who had come hither from real and sincere attachment, and

who took no part in the eager debates of these political champions.

Among others, the Count de M——, he whom I had never seen but as the prime wit of all joyous réunions—whose pungent joke and biting sarcasm have become the terror of bores and twaddlers, for they cling for ever, like burrs, to those against whom they are hurled:—the only man, in short, with whom the prince himself dared not, upon all occasions, to measure himself in the keen skirmish of intellect, now sat silent and sorrowful, apart from the rest, apparently lost in thought, nor heeding the various details of the scene which was enacting around him, and which, had it been elsewhere, would not have failed to call forth some of the sharp and bitter traits of satire for which he is so much dreaded. In one corner was seated a *coterie* of ladies, discussing topics entirely foreign to the time and place. Sometimes a low burst of light laughter would issue from among them, in spite of the reprimanding “Chut” which upon such occasions arose from the further end of the room. On a sofa near the window lay extended, at full length, the youthful and lovely Duchess de V——, with a bevy of young beaux—all robber-like and “jeune France,” kneeling on the carpet beside her, or sitting low at her feet on the cushions of the divan.

The scene was altogether one of other times. It seemed as though the lapse of centuries might be forgotten, and that we were carried back at a bound to the days of Louis Quatorze, and to the death-bed of Mazarin. There was the same *insouciance*, the same weariness of expectation. Some were gathered there from *convéance*, some from courtesy to the rest of the family; many from curiosity, and some few from real friendship; while none seemed to remember that a mighty spirit was passing from the world, or that they were there assembled to behold a great man die. Presently, however, the conversation ceased—the hum of voices was at an end—there was a solemn pause, and every eye was turned towards the slowly-opening door of the prince’s chamber. A domestic entered with downcast looks and swollen eyes, and ad-

vancing towards Dr. C——, who, like myself, had just then sought an instant's relief in the drawing-room, whispered a few words in his ear. He arose instantly, and entered the chamber. The natural precipitation with which this movement was executed but too plainly revealed its cause. It was followed by the whole assembly. In an instant every one was on the alert, and there was a simultaneous rush to the door of the apartment. M. de Talleyrand was at that moment seated on the side of the bed, supported in the arms of his secretary. It was evident that Death had set his seal upon that marble brow, yet was I struck with the still existing vigour of the countenance. It seemed as if all the life which had once sufficed to furnish forth the whole being were now centred in the brain. From time to time he raised his head, with a sudden movement shaking back the long, grey locks which impeded his sight, and gazed around; and then, satisfied with the result of his examination of that crowded room, a triumphant smile would pass across his features, and his head would again fall upon his bosom.

From the circumstances in which I have been placed, it has fallen to my lot to be witness of more than one death-scene, but never in any case did the sentiments displayed at that awful hour appear so utterly consistent with the character borne by any individual during life, as in the case of the Prince de Talleyrand. He saw death approach neither with shrinking nor with fear, nor yet with any affectation of scorn or of defiance, but rather with cool and steady courage, as a well-matched, honourable foe with whom he had wrestled long and bravely, and to whom, now that he was fairly vanquished, he deemed it no shame to yield, nor blushed to lay down his arms and surrender. If there be truth in the assertion, that it is a satisfaction to die amid the tears and lamentations of multitudes of friends and hosts of relatives, then, indeed, must his last feeling towards the world he was for ever quitting have been one of entire approbation and content, for he expired amid regal pomp and reverence; and of all those whom he, perhaps,

would himself have called together, none were wanting. The aged friend of his maturity, the fair young idol of his age, were gathered on bended knee beside his bed, and if the words of comfort whispered from the book by the murmuring priest failed to reach his ear, it was because their sound was stifled by the louder wailings of those whom in life he had loved so well.

Scarcely, however, were those eyes, whose every glance had been watched so long and with such deep interest, for ever closed, when a sudden change came over the scene. One would have thought that a flight of crows had suddenly taken wing, so great was the precipitation with which each one hurried from the hotel, in the hope of being first to spread the news among the particular set or coterie of which he or she happened to be the oracle. Ere nightfall, that chamber, which all the day had been crowded to excess, was abandoned to the servants of the tomb; and when I entered in the evening, I found the very arm-chair, from whence I had so often heard the prince launch the courtly jest or stinging epigram, now occupied by a hired priest, whispering prayers for the repose of his departed soul.

It was after the death of the prince that the awe and devotion with which he had inspired his household became evident. Not one of the domestics left his station upon any pretext whatever. The attendants waited, each in his turn, and at the same stated hour, to which he had been accustomed during his life. I myself saw the cook, punctual to the hour in the morning at which he had for so many years been summoned to receive his orders, now followed by his bevy of *marmittons*, with their snow-white costumes and long carving-knives, walk with solemn step to the foot of the bed, and, kneeling down with cotton cap in hand, breathe a short prayer: each sprinkled the corpse with holy water, and then the whole procession withdrew in the same silence with which they had entered. I was deeply struck with the mixture of the sublime and the ludicrous in this scene. It reminded me of many of the whimsical creations to be met with in some of the old German legends.

Contrary to the usual French custom, which ordains that interment shall ensue eight-and-forty hours after decease, the public funeral, upon the occasion of the depositing of the body in the church of the Assumption, did not take place until the following week, owing to the embalment, which was a work of time; while the transferring of the corpse to its final resting-place at Valençay could not be accomplished until the month of September, the vault, which was preparing even before the Prince's death, being yet unfinished.

Independently of the interest which I felt in the ceremony, as well as the desire to render this last homage to one who had, upon every occasion of my intercourse with him, been all kindness and urbanity to me, I determined to repair to Valençay and witness the funerals—for at one fell stroke had death swept from the earth all that remained of that one generation. The Prince de Talleyrand—the wise, the witty, the clever, and the cunning—was to go down to the grave with the guileless and the simple-hearted Duke, his brother! Upon the same occasion, too, the small tomb of the infant Yolande, wherein she had peacefully slumbered for a space of two years, was routed, and the tiny coffin was to accompany that of the Prince on its long and dreary journey. The hearse which was to convey the bodies was the same which had been constructed expressly for the removal of the corpse of the ex-Queen of Holland from Switzerland, in appearance something resembling an ammunition-waggon, with covered seats in front, wherein were stationed two of the personal attendants of the Prince. The body was raised from the vaults of the Assumption at midnight, and the little snow-white coffin was placed upon the elaborately-wrought oaken chest which had contained it.

I was told by a friend, who witnessed the scene, that nothing could exceed the dramatic effect of the departure of the corpse-laden vehicle from Paris. The disinterment of the child from the lonely cemetery of Mont Parnasse—the lading of the ponderous coffin by

the light of torches—the peculiar rattle of the hearse through the silent streets at that solemn hour, and beneath that calm moon, which makes “all that is dark seem darker still.” One incident is worth recording. On starting from the iron gates of the chapel, one of the postillions turned and shouted the usual question, “*Vers quelle barrière ?*” and was answered by a voice proceeding from the hearse itself, “*Barrière d’Enfer.*”

We arrived at Valençay on the third day after our departure from Paris, and it was at about ten o’clock on the same night that the worn and dust-covered hearse was descried wending its way up the long avenue of chestnut trees leading to the château. Every honour which had been paid to the lord of the mansion during his life was now rendered, with scrupulous exactness, to his lifeless corpse. No ceremony, however trifling, was omitted. The wide gates were thrown open to admit the sombre vehicle, which entered the court of honour with the same ceremony that had denoted the approach of the stately carriage which had been wont to drive at a somewhat ruder pace through the regal portal. The whole of the numerous household, with the heir of the domain in advance of the rest, were assembled on the perron. The Prince’s nephew himself took his seat in front of the hearse, to conduct it down into the town; the goodly array of servants and huntsmen and foresters all following on foot, and bearing torches, to the church, wherein the body was deposited for the night, previous to the final ceremony, which was to take place on the morrow.

Early in the morning all was astir in the little burgh. Never before had a sight so fraught with interest been witnessed by its inhabitants. It seemed like a gala day through every street. Not a window but was crowded with spectators, while the footway was choked with peasants from all the neighbouring districts, in their gayest attire. The National Guard of the town was all afoot from the earliest hour in the morning; and altogether so cheertul was the whole aspect of the place, that the traveller who had passed through on that day

would have imagined it to have been the anniversary of some great public rejoicing. The corpse of the Duke had arrived in far different plight. No pomp, no pageantry, was here—a solitary post-carriage, with a single pair of horses—no train of mourners. The physician who had attended his last illness alone accompanied the body from St. Germain.

There was food for reflection in the contrast! No needless expense had been wasted upon idle ornament and funeral trappings, for, when the coffin was uncovered, an exclamation of surprise burst from those around. It was of plain elm, such as those used by people of middling degree, and, when placed beside those of his more favoured relatives, formed a melancholy contrast. But now one pall conceals the whole, the rich velvet, and the plain, unvarnished planks. One long stream of melody ascends to Heaven, one prayer for the repose of those who sleep beneath that gorgeous catafalque—for him who died full of wealth and honour, whose vast and powerful intellect had held dominion over men's minds even to the very last—and for him who closed his eyes in solitude and neglect, and whose intellect had wavered even on the very verge of madness. Both were transported to the chapel of the Sisters of St. André, founded by the Prince himself, and wherein he had already placed the family vault. His body was the first to descend, amid the firing of muskets, and the noisy demonstrations of respect of those without: then that of the Duke, amid silence unbroken, save by the harsh creaking of the coffin, as it slid down the iron grating: then, last and least, although the oldest denizen of the tomb, the little Yolande, the fairy coffin seeming, with its silver chasings and embossed velvet of snowy whiteness, rather a casket destined to ornament the boudoir of a youthful beauty, than to become a receptacle of corruption and decay.

The vault was closed, and all was over. Each one had contributed the last token of Catholic respect, and we all turned from the chapel to take the road to the château, where entertainment for those who attended

the funeral had been liberally prepared by its new master. It was then that we began to look around, and to feel some curiosity to know who had shared with us in rendering this last homage to one who was entitled to the gratitude of every individual of his nation. We gazed right and left, but few were there, and these were *all* those who had *served him* devotedly and faithfully—the grateful domestic, the obscure and humble friend; but of the great ones of the earth whom *he had served*—of those whom *he* had raised, to greatness and to honour—there was not ONE!

EXTRACTS
FROM THE
MANUSCRIPTS OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S

MAXIMS FOR SEASONING CONVERSATION.

OUR welcome of a stranger depends upon the name he bears,—upon the coat he wears: our farewell upon the spirit he has displayed in the interview.

There is so great a charm in friendship, that there is even a kind of pleasure in acknowledging oneself duped by the sentiment it inspires.

Unbounded modesty is nothing more than unavowed vanity: the too humble obeisance is sometimes a disguised impertinence.

The reputation of a man is like his shadow—gigantic when it precedes him, and pigmy in its proportions when it follows.

The “point of honour” can often be made to produce, by means of vanity, as many good deeds as virtue.

More evil truths are discovered by the corruption of the heart than by the penetration of the mind.

Beauty, devoid of grace, is a mere hook without the bait.

Schismatic wranglers are like a child's top, noisy and agitated when whipped, quiet and motionless when left alone.

He who cannot feel friendship is alike incapable of love. Let a woman beware of the man who owns that he loves no one but herself.

The rich man despises those who flatter him too much, and hates those who do not flatter him at all.

The spirit and enterprise of a courtier are all expended in the search after place and preferment; nothing remains for the fulfilment of the duties to which success compels him.

The Count de Coigny possesses wit and talent; but his conversation is fatiguing, because his memory is equally exact in quoting the date of the death of Alexander the Great and that of the Princess de Guéménée's poodle.

My passion for Madame de Talleyrand was soon extinguished, because she was merely possessed of beauty. The influence of personal charms is limited: curiosity forms the great ingredient of this kind of love; but add the fascination of intellect to those attractions which habit and possession diminish each day, you will find them multiplied tenfold; and if, besides intellect and beauty, you discover in your mistress caprice, singularity, and inequality of temper, close your eyes and seek no further—you are in love for life.

The imagination of men is often the refuge of their prejudices.

To contradict and argue with a total stranger, is like knocking at a gate to ascertain if there is any one within.

That sovereign has a little mind who seeks to go down to posterity by means of great public buildings. It is to confide to masons and bricklayers the task of writing History.

Love is a reality which is born in the fairy region of romance.

The love of glory can only create a hero; the contempt of it creates a great man.

The mind of the Duc de Laval is like a dark lanthorn, only capable of lighting his own path.

The errors of great men, and the good deeds of reprobates, should not be reckoned in our estimates of their respective characters.

A court is an assemblage of noble and distinguished beggars.

Theologians resemble dogs, that gnaw large bones for the sake of a very little meat.

The stream of vice will flow as naturally into palaces, as the common sewer flows into the river, and the river flows onward to the sea.

It is sometimes quite enough for a man to feign ignorance of that which he knows, to gain the reputation of knowing that of which he is ignorant.

A long continuance of wise administration is the best and surest means of arriving at despotism. Our present government gives us no alarm.

Both erudition and agriculture ought to be encouraged by government; wit and manufactures will come of themselves.

The endeavour to convince a *bel esprit* by the force of reason, is as mad an undertaking as the attempt to silence an echo by raising the voice.

Metaphysics always remind me of the caravanserais in the desert. They stand solitary and unsupported, and are therefore always ready to crumble into ruin.

A man should make his *début* in the world as though he were about to enter a hostile country: he must send out scouts, establish sentinels, and ever be upon the watch himself.

Too much sensibility creates unhappiness; too much insensibility creates crime.

What I have been taught, I have forgotten; what I know, I have guessed.

An elderly coxcomb may be compared to a butterfly deprived of wings—he becomes a caterpillar once more.

Certain acts may be rendered legal; but can never be made legitimate.

Human life is like a game at chess; each piece holds its place upon the chess-board—king, queen, bishop, and pawn. Death comes, the game is up, and all are thrown, without distinction, pell-mell into the same bag.

The bold defiance of a woman is the certain sign of her shame—when she has once ceased to blush, it is because she has too much to blush for.

Life, to a young man, is like a new acquaintance, of whom he grows disgusted as he advances in years.

When certain absurd opinions become too generally adopted, they must be replaced by less noxious errors—that is the best way of arriving at Truth.

It is an attribute of true philosophy, never to force the progress of Truth and Reason, but to wait till the dawn of Light; meanwhile, the philosopher may wander into hidden paths, but he will never depart far from the main track.

Prudence in a woman should be an instinct, not a virtue.

Churchmen and men of letters have peculiar difficulties in the world,—the first are continually divided between scandal and hypocrisy, the second between pride and baseness.

The thought of death throws upon life a lurid glow, resembling that of a conflagration, lighting up that which it is about to devour.

In love we grow acquainted, because we are already

attached—in friendship we must know each other before we love.

A great capitalist is like a vast lake, upon whose bosom ships can navigate, but which is useless to the country, because no stream issues thence to fertilize the land.

With a great seigneur, there is more to be gained by flattering his vices than by improving his estates.

Truth and virtue can do less good in the world than their false, well-acted semblance can do evil.

A generous man will place the benefits he confers beneath his feet,—those he receives, nearest his heart.

A narrow-minded man can never possess real and true generosity—he can never go beyond mere benevolence.

General maxims applied to every-day life are like routine applied to the arts, good only for mediocre intellects.

If you wish to appear agreeable in society, you must consent to be taught many things which you know already.

We must learn to submit with grace to commit the follies which depend upon character.

There are many vices which do not deprive us of friends,—there are many virtues which prevent our having any.

In reading over the memoirs of the reign of Louis Quatorze, we find many things in the worst manners of that day, which are wanting in the very best society of our own.

I remember having, in my youth, been amused at the resolution of one of my friends to give up the society of the *demoiselles de l'opéra*, to which he was much addicted, in consequence of his having made the discovery that there existed among these girls as much falsehood and hypocrisy as amongst honest women.

Certain women can find buyers for their charms, who would find no one to take them were they to be had for nothing.

I remember having often been told in my youth that the love of glory was a virtue. Strange must be that virtue which requires the aid of every vice.

There are two things to which we never grow accustomed,—the ravages of time, and the injustice of our fellow men.

The written memoirs which a man leaves after him, *pour servir à l'histoire de sa vie*, and, above all, *pour servir à l'histoire* of his vanity, always remind me of the story of that saint, who left by will a hundred thousand crowns to the Church, to pay for his canonization.

To succeed in the world, it is much more necessary to possess the penetration to discover who is a fool than to discover who is a clever man.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S OPINION OF FOX.

(*A Fragment from the Prince's Memoirs.*)

January 15th, 1807.

I HAVE just heard of the death of Mr. Fox. It is now fifteen years since I was introduced to him by Mr. Ogilvie, the husband of his aunt, the Duchess of Leinster. It was at his own house, in South-street, and I think in June, 1791.

Shortly before his death, false reports led him to form an unjust opinion of me; yet my regret for his loss is not the less deep and sincere, and I feel a firm conviction that, had his life been spared, he would have rendered me justice.

Mr. Fox united in his own character the apparently

incompatible qualities of the mildest of men and the most vehement of orators. In private life he was gentle, modest, kind-hearted, and remarkably simple in his manners. His dislike of ostentation, and of any approach to dogmatism, sometimes gave to his conversation an air of listlessness; his superiority was manifested only by the information he diffused around him, and by the generous feeling which always prompted him to direct the greatest share of his attention to the most obscure members of the company in which he happened to be. The simplicity of his manners did not, in the least, detract from that urbanity, and perfect politeness, which resulted more from the gentleness of his nature, than from his familiar intercourse with the most polished society of Europe. His conversation, when not restrained by the languor arising from fatigue, or by his delicacy towards others, was truly charming. It may, perhaps, be said, that never was the pleasantry of a man of wit so perfectly natural as that of Mr. Fox; it seemed more like the outpouring, than the creation, of his fancy. He had lived on terms of close intimacy with all those of his contemporaries most distinguished for talent, learning, and political eminence. For the space of thirty years, he maintained intercourse with almost every man in Europe whose conversation and correspondence were of a nature to fortify, enrich, or polish the intellectual faculties. His own literary attainments were varied and profound. In classical erudition, which in England is specially understood by the term learning, he was not inferior to some of the most distinguished scholars of his day. Like all men of genius, he was passionately fond of poetry; the study and cultivation of that branch of literature formed his favourite source of recreation, amidst the fatigues and annoyances of public life. His own poetic effusions were easy and agreeable, and deserving of a high place in that class of writing which the French call *vers de société*. The character of his mind was manifested in his predilection for the poetry of the two most poetic nations (or at least most poetic languages) of eastern Europe, viz., the ancient Greek

and the modern Italian. Fox did not like political discussions in conversation, and he never voluntarily took part in them.

Any attempt to render justice to his oratorical talents would carry me far beyond the limits of these brief remarks. He was always, and everywhere, natural; and, in public, his manner and appearance were stamped with much of the simplicity which characterized him in private life. When he began to speak, an ordinary observer would have supposed him to be labouring under embarrassment, and even a discriminating listener would only have been struck by the just accuracy of his ideas, and the lucid simplicity of his language; but, after speaking for some time, he was transformed into another being. He forgot himself, and everything around him. His thoughts were wholly absorbed in his subject. His genius warmed as he advanced, and his sentences flashed like rays of light: until at length, in an impetuous and irresistible torrent of eloquence, he carried along with him the feelings and the conviction of his hearers. Fox certainly possessed, beyond any public speaker of modern times, that union of reasoning power, of simplicity, and of vehemence, which characterizes the prince of orators. Next to Demosthenes, he was the most Demosthenian of public speakers. "I knew him," observes Mr. Burke, in a pamphlet written after their unfortunate difference, "when he was only nineteen years old. From that time he continued rising, by slow degrees, until he has now become the most brilliant and accomplished debater that ever lived."

The tranquil dignity of mind, (never disturbed but by great causes)—the total absence of vanity—the contempt of ostentation—the hatred of intrigue—the candour, the honesty, and the perfect *bonhomie*, which were the distinguishing qualities of Fox, would seem to render him the faithful representative of the old national English character—a character which it would be presumptuous to hope can be succeeded by anything better, were it ever to change. The amiability of his disposition inspired confidence—the ardour of his eloquence

excited enthusiasm—and the urbanity of his manners invited friendship. Mr. Gibbon has truly observed, that in Fox the highest intellectual powers of man were blended with the engaging gentleness and simplicity of childhood. No human being, he adds, was ever more free from every trace of malignity, vanity, or falsehood. The combination of so many admirable qualities of public and private character sufficiently accounts for the fact, that no English statesman, during so long a period of adverse fortune, retained so many attached friends and zealous adherents as Charles Fox. The union of great ardour, in the sentiments of the public man, with extreme gentleness in the manners of the social being, would appear to have been an hereditary qualification in Fox, whose father is said to have possessed the same power of winning the attachment of all who knew him. Those who are acquainted with another generation of his descendants, must feel that this engaging quality is not extinct in the family.

Nothing, perhaps, can more forcibly portray the impression produced by this peculiarity in the character of Fox than a remark made by Burke. In 1797, six years after all intimacy between Burke and Fox had ceased, the former, speaking to an individual honoured by the friendship of the latter, said, "Certainly, Fox is a man formed to be loved;" and these words were uttered with a warmth and emphasis, which precluded all doubt of their cordial sincerity.

The few lines I have here hastily traced, have been written under feelings too sorrowful and serious to admit of any intention to exaggerate: and the affection which I cherished for Mr. Fox will not suffer me to profane his memory by any allusion to the factious contentions of the day. The political conduct of Fox belongs to history. The measures he supported, and those he opposed, may divide the opinions of posterity, as they have those of the present age; but Charles Fox will, assuredly, command the unanimous respect of future generations, by his pure sentiments as a statesman—by his zeal for the civil and religious rights of all mankind—

by his advocacy of liberal government, the free exercise of human faculties, and the progressive civilization of the human race—by the ardent love he cherished for his country, whose welfare and happiness can never be disconnected from his glory—and by his profound veneration for that free constitution, which, it will be acknowledged, he understood better than any politician of his time, both in its legal and in its philosophical character.

ANOTHER FRAGMENT

FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S MEMOIRS.

THE king insisted that the favourable opinion entertained of the services I had rendered him required that he should instal me in one of the high offices of the crown. The post of *grand écuyer* could not be said to be either vacant or filled, as M. de L—— had not tendered his resignation. The king, who still had a leaning to old usages, thought he could not dispose of the post, though the conduct of M. de L——, since the Restoration, had not been congenial with French feeling, but altogether in unison with Austrian ideas. The office of *grand chamberlain* seemed to be suited to me, though I had filled it under Buonaparte, who deprived me of it to mark his dissatisfaction at the attentions I showed the Spanish princes at Valençay, and at the manner in which I had expressed myself concerning the war against Spain. I lost my post of *grand chamberlain*, with a salary of 100,000 francs, because I had rendered some assistance, and offered some little solace, to the princes of Spain during their sojourn at Valençay; and subsequently, the Restoration took from me the post of *vice-chamberlain*, with a salary of 333,000 francs. Yet I never expressed the least disquietude re-

specting my fortune, or any desire to seek the means of enlarging my income.

The king restored me to the post of grand chamberlain, with the emolument of 100,000 francs. This post, owing to the pretensions of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, had become a mere sinecure. It conferred rank, dignity, and emolument, without requiring the performance of any duties. The gentlemen of the bed-chamber had returned to their places, with all their old pretensions; vanity prompted them to encroach on the highest and most honourable services, whilst courtly meanness made them ready to perform the most annoying and undignified duties. In the circumstances in which I was placed, I felt that my proper course of conduct was to avoid all expression of disapprobation towards the ministers who had succeeded me, and to take no part in the numerous reproaches vented on their administration. My old-fashioned notions of decorum suggested to me the delicacy due from the ministers who had gone out of office to the ministers who had come in; and I determined to confine myself completely within the sphere of my post of grand chamberlain. Accordingly, I presented myself to the king once a week: the rest of my time I spent among my old books, and in narrating the events I have witnessed in my lifetime, or in which I have taken part. I never spoke in the Chamber of Peers, because I wished to avoid alike the expression of censure or approval. I rarely voted; and, in short, I endeavoured, as much as possible, to maintain the character of indifference;—a most essential qualification in a grand chamberlain. I imagined that, in observing this line of conduct towards my successors, I should secure, on their part, respect, or, at all events, their silence in reference to the administration of my colleagues and myself. I was, consequently, not a little astonished, when I found, in the journals under the control of their censorship, that all the mean adulation lavished on the existing ministers, was accompanied by comparisons prejudicial to the ministers who had preceded them. Certain comments on the treaty I had

refused to sign, and to which they had affixed their signature, appeared to me at once exceedingly unfair and maladroit; for future generations will not fail to compare the truly French feeling of the men who quitted office because they would not sign, and the pliant principles of the men who signed in order to keep office. The fact is, that the interests of France were completely disregarded in this matter. The Allies took advantage of the inexperience of the Duke de Richelieu's administration; and that circumstance cost France the loss of some portion of her territory, at the same time entailing so many other sacrifices, that I have sometimes reproached myself for my resignation at that particular juncture. Certainly, had I been in office, France would not have been subject to the humiliations she has suffered, and which no power should have presumed to inflict on her. It is for me alone to reproach myself. In the estimation of others, I stand in that position in which it was more noble to have resigned office, because I would not sign, than to have signed for the sake of keeping my place. After all, there is some grace in knowing when to resign. The position in which I stood ought not to have exposed me to the insults of journalists. Silence would have been more becoming; but it is difficult for people of mean spirit to restrain themselves by silence. At first I considered these attacks unworthy of notice, and it was only by their daily renewal that I was enabled to perceive they were the result of a settled plan. It was only when they were perseveringly forced on my attention, that I found it necessary to adopt means to repress them. Public credulity readily imbibes erroneous impressions. I tried the effect of absence. I went into the country, and remained there for some time; but all in vain! Unpopularity rendered my successors dissatisfied with themselves. It is the nature of man to blame others, and not himself, for his own errors; accordingly, I was still the individual against whom censure was directed. But for my influence, it was alleged, certain things would have been done, and certain measures would have succeeded - a more decided

course would have been taken, &c. &c. Little-minded people always assign their failures to causes in which they themselves have no part. I now thought it time to show less forbearance, and I openly avowed, to my friends and others whom I casually saw, that I did not approve the line of policy adopted by the ministers, nor, indeed, of any of the means resorted to for establishing the government of the Restoration. The ministerial interference with the elections, (an example which has been followed in latter times, with such disastrous results,) afforded me an opportunity of declaring my sentiments.

The first person to whom I spoke on this subject was Baron Pasquier, with whom I dined one day at the English ambassador's. We were each waiting for his carriage, and consequently our conversation was but short. Nevertheless, it would appear that enough passed to afford grounds for misrepresentation, and the king was pleased to think, that the best mode of supporting his ministry was to show his disapproval of me. In a letter, written by the first gentleman of the bedchamber, his majesty forbade my appearing at court without the royal permission. Thus, in the same *jaquetil* in which I had twice installed him, did Louis XVIII. sign, without any previous explanation, and on the report of a man whom he scarcely knew, an order prohibiting me from going to the Tuileries.

Whilst I was suffering under this species of disgrace, I had many visitors. The marshals, and other persons to whom I had never rendered any service, came to see me more frequently than those on whom I had conferred obligations. These latter were prudent; they feared lest they might themselves incur courtly disfavour. I have remarked the proneness to this kind of ingratitude at the present day. The false position in which every one has been placed since the Restoration has doubtless helped to create it. That sort of police which society itself exercises, for repressing the wrongs of society, having ceased to exist, the evil passions of human nature show themselves more openly. The emigration

has largely contributed to bring about this state of things.

My disgrace did not tend to raise the king in public estimation, either abroad or at home; and his majesty was therefore desirous of bringing the matter to an end. The same gentleman of the chamber who wrote the letter forbidding my appearance at court, now wrote to acquaint me that the king would receive me again with pleasure. I went, and, to spare the king embarrassment, I did not attempt to enter into any explanation. I was aware that he would not acknowledge he had been in the wrong, and yet that acknowledgment was the only great and gracious thing he could have uttered.

I felt that what passed between the king and myself entitled me to censure or disapprove measures which appeared to me injurious to France; and I began occasionally to deliver my opinion in the Chamber of Peers on the questions discussed in that assembly. I endeavoured to show that the government would gain strength by taking an honest and constitutional course, and disavowing all falsehood and evasion; that sincerity in the management of public affairs would simplify everything, and consolidate at once the position of the king and of the country. The French people are too shrewd to be imposed on for any length of time, and when once they find themselves deceived they are ever afterwards distrustful. In the interval between the sessions I made two excursions into the provinces. The aspect of nature has a wonderful effect on the mind, especially when one has just escaped from the strife and agitation of public affairs. Matters which fret and weary us in the active business of life, dwindle into insignificance in the retirement of the country. On the summit of a mountain, we feel alike beyond the reach of towering ambition and grovelling malice. There, all the annoying phantoms of life vanish.

At the beginning of winter I returned to Paris. My associations were limited to persons whose opinions coincided with my own, and I took part in no public business, except the discussions on the liberty of the press.

which were maintained during two or three years successively. I observed the course of events in all parts of Europe, and watched the contest that was maintained between despotism and constitutional government. The first decided outbreaks of this contest were manifested at Naples and at Venice. Speedily the revolution in Spain spread agitation throughout France, and brought to light the work in which the Jesuits had been secretly engaged since the Restoration. The ministry, which was composed of emigrants, or of persons whose minds were tainted with the prejudice and bigotry which the emigration had brought back to France, conferred all government appointments on persons of their own way of thinking, or on those who, from interested motives, affected to coincide in their views. Then followed congress upon congress, intrigue upon intrigue; and the Emperor Alexander showed his feebleness of character by seeking refuge in that Holy Alliance which too plainly demonstrated that sovereigns had interests apart from those of their subjects. I often think of what must be the result of the existing conflict between intelligence and despotism. I reflect on the great change that will be wrought by new compacts between subjects and sovereigns. It is only by this means that social order can be established. We are told that this or that particular country requires more stringent measures of government than others; but all nations have rights, which vary according to the greater or less degree of civilization they may have reached. The recognition of these rights is at once the security of thrones and the guarantee of public freedom. These rights may and can be enforced without popular convulsions; but, in proportion as the rights of mankind are disavowed or withheld, the more violent will be the struggles to recover them, and in the end these struggles will prove triumphant. This is my opinion, and it will remain unaltered to the latest day of my life.

LETTER TO HIS MAJESTY KING WILLIAM IV., FROM
PRINCE TALLEYRAND, ON HIS BEING APPOINTED AM-
BASSADOR FROM FRANCE.

"SIRE.—His Majesty the King of the French has been pleased to make me the interpreter of the sentiments he cherishes for your Majesty. .

"I have joyfully accepted a mission which gives so noble a direction to the last steps of my long public career.

"Sire, amidst all the vicissitudes through which I have passed during my long life — amidst all the changes of good and ill fortune I have undergone during the last forty years, no circumstance has afforded me such perfect gratification as the appointment which brings me back to this happy country. But how great is the change between the period when I was formerly here and the present time! The jealousies and prejudices which so long divided France and England have given place to enlightened sentiments of esteem and affection. Unity of feeling rivets the bonds of amity between the two countries. England, like France, repudiates the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of neighbouring states, and the ambassador of a sovereign unanimously chosen by a great nation, feels himself at home in a land of freedom, as the missionary to a descendant of the illustrious house of Brunswick.

"I feel that I may with confidence implore your Majesty's kind consideration of the subjects which I am commanded to submit to your attention, and I beg, Sire, to offer the homage of my profound respect."

OPINION OF THE BISHOP OF AUTUN ON THE SUBJECT
OF ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY, DELIVERED IN THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THE YEAR 1789.

[THE following extracts comprise the principal points of this address.]

“ I have stated, gentlemen, the reasons which lead me to believe that ecclesiastical property is national property. If those reasons, which nothing has for an instant shaken in my own mind, appear to you of some weight in themselves, how much more weighty, how much more decisive must they not appear under all the circumstances of the present juncture? Let us only look around us; the public fortune is tottering—its approaching fall threatens all other fortunes, and in this universal disaster who would have greater cause to fear than the clergy? Invidious comparisons have long been made between the public indigence and the private opulence of many among us; let us silence in one moment these unpleasant murmurs, so offensive to our patriotism. Let us deliver up to the nation both our persons and our fortunes;—the nation will never forget the act.

“ Let us not say that the clergy, merely from being no longer landed proprietors, will on that account become less worthy of public consideration. No! the clergy will not be the less revered by the people from their being paid by the nation; for the heads of offices, ministers, and even kings themselves, receive salaries without being the less honoured on that account. No! the clergy will not become odious to the people, for it is not from the individual hands of the citizens that the minister of religion will seek his tribute, but from the public treasury, like all the other mandatories of the government. Do we not constantly see the people consenting to forget that the functionaries of the state are in their pay, and uniting with their generous tributes the personal homage of respect for men whose duties are often opposed to their passions, and sometimes even

to their interests? Who shall persuade us to believe that the French people, whose sense of justice is greater than their calumniators would lead us to suppose, would withdraw their grateful esteem from those who ought not, who will not, who cannot inspire them with any but virtuous sentiments; who would pour into their bosoms the consolations of charity, and discharge towards them at all times the most paternal duties?

“ Say not that the cause of religion is bound up with this question;—say rather, what we all know, say that the greatest act of religion which would redound to our own honour, would be to hasten the arrival of that period when a better order of things will sweep away the abuses of corruption, and will prevent the occurrence of that multitude of open crimes and secret offences which are the fruits of great public calamities. Say that the noblest homage that can be paid to religion, is to contribute to the formation of a state of social order which should foster and protect the virtues religion ordains and rewards, and which, in the perfection of society, should constantly remind men of the benefactor of nature. The people, brought back to religion by the feeling of their own happiness, will remember, not without gratitude, the sacrifices which the ministers of religion will have made for the general good. Everything unites in demanding it. Public opinion everywhere proclaims the law of justice, united to that of necessity. A few moments longer, and we shall lose, in an unequal and degrading struggle, the honour of a generous resignation. Let us meet necessity, and we shall seem not to fear it, or rather, to use a form of expression more worthy of you, we shall in reality not fear it. We should not then be dragged to the altar of the country; we should be bearing to it a voluntary offering. Of what use is it to defer the moment? What troubles, what misfortunes might not have been prevented, if the sacrifices consummated here for three months past had been made in proper time a gift of patriotism? Let us show that we wish to be citizens, and citizens only, and that we really desire to join in the national unity

which France so ardently longs for. Finally, in ceasing to form a body which is a constant object of envy, the clergy will become an assemblage of citizens, and objects of national gratitude.

“In conclusion, then, I would recommend that the principle involving the proprietorship of the ecclesiastical revenues should be at once determined; and, to avoid all appearance of equivocation, I would recommend it should be decreed by the National Assembly that the nation is the real proprietor, and can dispose of them for the public good. The nation must at the same time pledge itself to preserve for each incumbent that which really belongs to him, and to provide for the due settlement (in such manner as may be deemed most fitting) of the real obligations with which those properties are burthened.”

EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH OF THE BISHOP OF AUTUN,
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS MOTION ON THE SUBJECT
OF ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM, ON THE 10TH OF OCTOBER, 1789.

“THE state has for a long time had to struggle with the greatest difficulties: none of us are ignorant of this fact, and therefore powerful means must be employed to meet them. Ordinary measures have been exhausted; the people are hard pressed on every side, and the slightest additional burden would naturally be felt insupportable. In fact, it is not to be thought of. Extraordinary resources have just been tried, but they are principally destined for the extraordinary necessities of the present year. We want provision for the future—we want provision for the entire restoration of order. There exists one immense and decided resource, and one which in my opinion (for otherwise I should repel the idea) may be combined with a rigid respect for pro-

perty. This resource appears to me to lie entirely in the ecclesiastical revenues.

* * * * *

“ I do not mean a contribution towards maintaining the burthens of the state proportional to that arising from other kinds of property : this could never be viewed in the light of a sacrifice. The operation I point at is one of far greater importance to the nation. * * ”

“ It appears evident to me that the clergy are not in the position of other landed proprietors, because the property they enjoy (and which they cannot dispose of) has been given, not for personal interest, but for the performance of certain duties.

“ It would also appear that the nation, in virtue of the extensive powers it possesses over all the bodies contained within it, has a right to destroy, if not the whole, at all events, portions of the ecclesiastical body, if they are considered hurtful, or even useless, and that this right over their existence necessarily carries with it an extensive right over the disposal of its property.

“ It is moreover certain that the nation, precisely because it is the protector of the wishes of the founders, can, and even ought to suppress those livings which have become sinecures.

“ Thus far there is no difficulty ; but the question is, Can the nation also reduce the revenue of the actual incumbents, and dispose of a portion of that revenue ? There appears to me one very simple answer to the arguments of those who deny this right.

“ However inviolable may be the possession of a property which is guaranteed by law, it is clear that the law cannot change the nature of the property by guaranteeing it ; and that, in the case of ecclesiastical property, it can only ensure to each actual incumbent the enjoyment of what has really been granted to him by the act of his foundation. Now, it is well known that all the foundation titles of ecclesiastical property, as well as the various laws of the church explanatory of the sense and the spirit of those titles, show that only that portion of the property which is necessary for the

decent maintenance of the incumbent really belongs to him—that he is merely the administrator of the remainder, which remainder is really destined for the relief of the poor, or the repair of the temples of God. If, then, the nation carefully ensures to each incumbent (whatever may be the nature of his living) that respectable maintenance, it will not be encroaching upon his individual property. If, at the same time, it takes upon itself, as it has the undoubted right to do, the administration of the rest; if it undertakes the other obligations attached to these properties, such as the maintenance of hospitals and charitable institutions, the repairs of churches, the expenses of public education, &c.; if, above all, these resources are drawn upon only at the moment of a general calamity, it appears to me that all the intentions of the founders will be fulfilled, and full justice will have been rigidly accomplished.

“Thus, in brief recapitulation, I would state my belief, that the nation may, without injustice, in a period of general distress, 1st, dispose of the properties of the different religious communities which it may be desirable to suppress, ensuring, at the same time, means of subsistence to the incumbents; 2ndly, turn to immediate account (always carrying out the general spirit of the founders) the revenues of all the sinecure livings which may be vacant, and secure those of all similar livings as they become vacant; and 3rdly, reduce, according to a certain proportion, the present revenues of the incumbents, whenever they shall exceed a certain given sum, the nation taking upon itself a portion of the obligations with which those properties were originally charged.”

* * * * *

THE END.

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